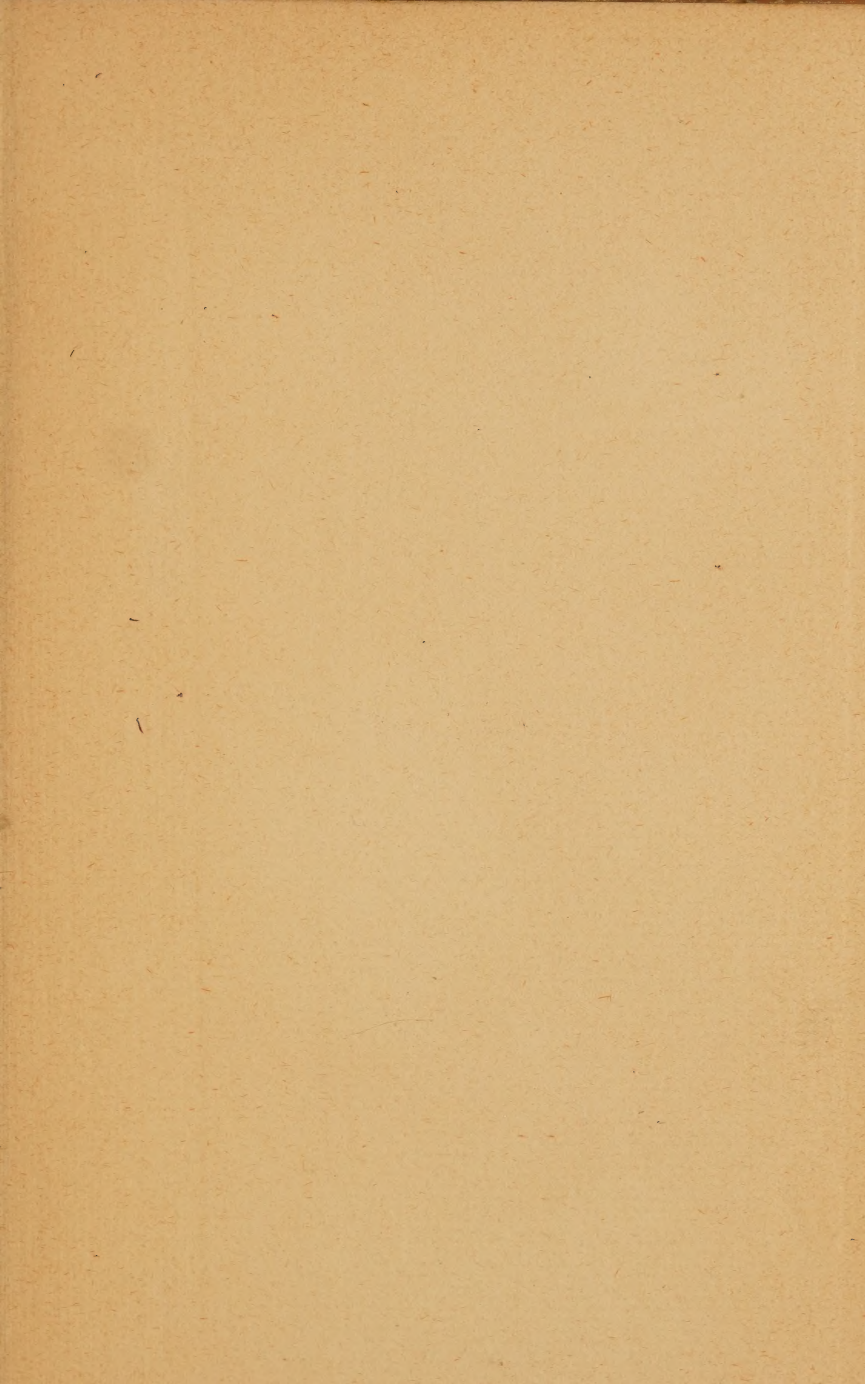


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INDUCTIVE THEOLOGY





MANUAL  
OF  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY  
ON THE  
INDUCTIVE METHOD

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## P R E F A C E

THE pages which are here submitted to the public are the result of the work of the past thirty years with successive classes of students. The lectures were revised and enlarged with each successive delivery, and several times entirely rewritten in the effort to meet the questions of current thought, and once with a special view of helping Japanese students who must approach the study of Christian truth from a point of view quite different from that of their European brethren. The principle which underlies the entire work was forced upon the writer while still a youthful pastor striving to minister to the spiritual wants of a congregation in which were a number of keen young men familiar with the current scepticism of forty years ago. In striving to meet this he found that the apologetics of the eighteenth century were of little or no service. The questions of historical criticism, of scientific objection, and of pantheistic and materialistic philosophy were so

new in form and principle that the old defences offered no satisfaction. In fact in striving to help others, he found his own faith put to the test. His sole anchorage in this conflict was the inner assurance of faith. In the quiet of closet communion all doubt as to the essential truth of Christianity as a faith of the heart in God and in His word disappeared before the assurance of faith. It was soon clear to him that this rather than rational, scientific, or historical investigation, must in the very nature of the case be the basis of the faith of the great majority of mankind. Even his acute and scholarly young hearers in busy professional life could give to such questions only the most superficial attention. His own busy pastorate made it difficult if not impossible to himself to do justice to any one of the fields opened up by the current thought of the age. And if this was the case with college-bred men, what of the masses of mankind? This forced him back upon the fundamental question of the true foundation of all certainty in religion. The answer to the question the reader will find imperfectly presented in the present work, together with a humble attempt from such foundation to



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reconstruct theology. He hopes that the truth is the old truth in its evangelical fulness, and that his readers will be able each one for himself to carry forward to greater completeness the work here begun. In this hope it is offered to the Christian student with the prayer that God may graciously condescend to use it for His glory. N. B.

TORONTO, *August* 1900.





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# INDUCTIVE THEOLOGY

## INTRODUCTION



### CHAPTER I

#### RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

RELIGION is an existing fact both in human nature and in human history. It is therefore a proper subject for scientific investigation.

The most casual examination of the facts of religion will show us that it embraces three elements : 1st, Sentiment or feeling, which may vary from dread, fear, awe, reverence, to trust and love. 2nd, Ideas or conceptions of the unseen object of these feelings and of our relations to Him. 3rd, Acts of worship and service founded on these feelings and ideas, and giving practical expression to them.

Religion may thus be defined as the relation of man's heart and life to God as the unseen power of the Universe. These definitions apply to all religions, perfect or imperfect, true or false, natural or supernatural. Every historical religion has some feeling toward God, some idea of Him, and expresses both by some form of worship.

These elements of religion, as facts of human nature and history, may be studied in various

ways. As elements in the constitution of human nature they may be studied as a department of psychology; as giving rise to various cults and to peculiar customs of different races, they may be studied as a department of anthropology; or they may be treated as a distinct science, the science of comparative religion. In each of these three methods of treatment the interest is purely scientific. The student may or may not be a religious man; *i.e.* himself a believer in religion and religious truths. He simply proceeds by the usual method of analysis and generalization in dealing with attested and existent facts.

An entirely different interest arises and an entirely different method of procedure results when the student approaches the study of religion for the purpose of perfecting his own religious life and that of his fellow-men. He deals now no longer with the mere facts in the causes and methods of their occurrence, but with the inner nature of the facts. His questions now are: Are these feelings right or wrong? Are these ideas true or false? Are these actions reasonable and proper, or absurd and unworthy? He is even thrown back to a more fundamental investigation. Is religion a true and essential element of human life? or is it an imperfection, an accidental excrescence, to be removed as speedily as it can be done with safety?

The answer to these questions must be found in an examination of the second element in our



definition of religion. We can only judge of the right or wrong of our feelings toward God and of the propriety or absurdity of our acts of worship and service when we have examined the truth or falsity of our ideas of God and of our relation to Him. Again, having settled the right and truth of religion in general, we can only hope to perfect our religious life by the aid of true conceptions of God and of our relation to Him. Theology is the science which deals with this field of truth in this religious interest.

#### THEOLOGY.

In every science it is of the utmost importance that we define clearly the province of our investigation and the method by which it is to be conducted. The province of theology is the truth concerning God and our relations to Him as it has been revealed to man's religious faith and has entered into his religious life. Its duty is to separate this truth from error and to present it in the unity of scientific form. Theology is on one side nearly related to, yet distinct from, philosophy. Philosophy seeks for the ultimate cause of all being and the relation of all being to the first cause; but it pursues this investigation by the aid of the fundamental principles of pure reason and the laws of human thought. It apprehends the first cause by the light of reason; theology by the light of religious faith. Science also seeks for an ultimate cause, or

rather unity of cause, but it proceeds upon the basis of facts observed by the senses. If it passes beyond this limit it becomes philosophy. Theology, philosophy, and science, are thus intimately related. They all point in the same direction, but each along its own pathway. They should never be confused. They should be mutually helpful. But they can be made so only by perfect confidence each in the other, and by each conscientiously cultivating its own field without jealousy of its neighbour. Their final perfection will be a perfect harmony of results.

The comparative science of religions also lies very near to the province of theology. An important element of science must be the study of the theologies or mythologies of the several religions, *i.e.* of their conceptions of God. But comparative religion deals with these in their origin, their historical development and their mutual inter-relations. It treats them as historical facts, leaving the essential truth or falsity of each as a matter for separate investigation. It is evident that this can never be determined, and should not even be prejudged by the facts of origin and development. For the settlement of this question the tests of truth must be applied to the thing itself, and these tests must be such as are applicable to the thing in its own nature. We cannot test colour by the ear, or music by the eye. So in this field, theology has its own province and must proceed by its appropriate methods.

We conclude, then, that the province of theology

is to ascertain the truth which is apprehended in religious faith, to separate that truth from error, to present it in unity of scientific system, and to demonstrate its harmony with all related truth.

#### THEOLOGICAL METHOD.

Theology, like science and philosophy, must proceed by a right method if it is to succeed in its task. Method is concerned with both the collection and the treatment of material. In the physical and natural sciences the materials are obtained through the senses, and method in the collection of material in this field is chiefly concerned with accuracy of observation. The facts of nature are ultimate things. Science may not criticise or question them. Her only duty is to know them accurately, not to mistake them. Having so collected her materials she treats them by inductive processes, *i.e.* she analyses, compares and classifies her facts, and seeks to reach general facts which she calls laws. This is the inductive method. In the mathematical sciences, on the other hand, the materials are certain fundamental principles which we say cannot be otherwise. Two and two not only are four, but cannot but be four. Things equal to the same thing are and cannot but be equal to each other; that is, we cannot think otherwise. These are the necessary laws which govern our conceptions of number and of space. From these first principles we proceed to deduce conclusions



by the syllogistic process. If the process is perfect the conclusion is as certain as the fundamental axioms. This is the deductive method. It is introduced into the physical and natural sciences in the formation of hypotheses and theories. The true scientist, however, always distinguishes these from his ascertained results, *i.e.* inductions carefully worked out. So in the mathematics we help the child whose apprehension of number is still undeveloped by a numeral frame. A true mathematician scorns such assistance.

The mathematician thus builds with necessary truth, the scientist with observed truth, and their methods of treatment vary accordingly.

Philosophy, like mathematics, builds upon what it takes to be necessary truth, and likewise largely follows the deductive method and seeks to establish its conclusions as necessary truth. It has, however, in all ages arrived at certain ultimate contradictions which it has not been able to remove, and which show that the task is beyond the finite mind. We may be able to follow the necessary relations of finite space and number, and yet not of infinite and absolute being.

In theology in the past the favourite method has been the deductive. We have treated the truths revealed to religious faith as necessary truths, and we have boldly proceeded to evolve them into a deductive system, partly by combination within themselves and partly by intermixture with our favourite philosophy. Has not this method been the source both of confusion and

of error? To accept the inductive method is, it is true, a humbler pathway, but much safer. The truths of religion may be necessary truths. They certainly so appear to religious faith. The religious faith cannot but conceive of truth, holiness and love as attributes of God. Some of them so appear even to pure reason. But do we not pass the limits of our powers when we proceed to conclusions as to what God must be and do, involving long deductive processes and the intermingling of much philosophy? We have, therefore, concluded that the inductive method is the safer in the study of theology, and will enable us with much more assurance to confine ourselves to our own province.

The inductive method is also in harmony with the processes by which religious truth comes to men. While in all cases it must ultimately be received as an inward conviction, and in that respect resembles intuitive and necessary truth, yet these convictions in all religions arise from facts of nature, history, or individual life which are regarded as revealing God, or from the teaching of men regarded as specially qualified to interpret these facts. These facts and teachings constitute the revelation of God to the race as distinguished from the revelation to or in each individual, and it is with this wider revelation that theology has to do, and such a revelation, if it really exists, clearly must be treated by the inductive method. We must study it as it is, not as we think it ought to be.

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The materials of theology, whether they consist of traditional teachings or sacred books, recorded historical facts or facts of nature and daily human life, must be treated inductively; *i.e.* they must be accurately observed and understood, and then so collected as to present us with their whole volume of religious truth.

But granting that our theology is to be chiefly an inductive science, each inductive science has its own method of observation and its own tests of accuracy in the definition of truth. The balance in chemistry, measurement in physics, the microscope in biology, statistics in economics are familiar examples. And not only the instrument but also the observer must be fitted for his work. Gifts of nature and acquired skill are necessary to the highest efficiency. So here spiritual truth must be judged by spiritual tests and by spiritual men. The inductive method must be adapted to religious truth.

The primary requisite therefore to a student of theology is strong, clear religious faith. Without this he is blind, has no eyes to see that for which he is seeking. This religious faith must be pure as well as active and strong. Its purity is secured only by placing it in right relation to reason on the one side and to conscience on the other. If, through lack of exercise of sound reason and intelligence, it admits into its temple false notions and imaginations it becomes superstition, and is worshipping a lie. If through lack of attention to the holy voice of conscience it admits unclean



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things, religion may become vile as well as superstitious. Pure religion and undefiled arises from religious faith guarded by reason and conscience. It seeks truth in the field of religion just as conscience seeks truth in the region of morals and reason seeks truth in the region of knowledge.

## CHAPTER II

### CRITERIA OF TRUTH IN THEOLOGY

TRUTH is that in human thought which corresponds to reality or fact in being. Such truth is either general or particular, the widest extension belonging to that which we call necessary truth. Science ever seeks the wider truth, philosophy the necessary and universal. Religious truth is general and universal in the highest sphere, that of spiritual being.

How do we know truth as truth? Especially, how may we know religious truth? What is the nature and what are the means of certainty?

That these questions are as necessary in the sphere of religious truth as in that of science or philosophy is evident, inasmuch as out of the ultimate facts of nature, history and individual life upon which religion is based have come not only widely various and incompatible religious systems, but almost endless variety of individual notions and beliefs. This by no means implies that truth and certainty are beyond our reach in the field of religion. The same variations present themselves in the history of science and philosophy. They but prove to us that truth and certainty

must be sought and can be found only by the most painstaking effort.

Certainty as a state of mind is reached by various processes.

1. In the use of the five senses.
2. In self-consciousness.
3. The pure reason apprehending necessary truth.
4. The moral intuition.
5. The aesthetic intuition.
6. The religious intuition (the basis of faith).
7. Spiritual consciousness.

These are the primary channels of certainty. They may be confirmed by the process of verification and extended to new aspects of the truth by inductive or deductive reasoning.

These several means of certainty correspond to the various fields of our knowledge. The senses give us certainty of the facts of the material world. By consciousness we apprehend and become certain of the activities of our own minds. Pure reason gives us certainty of necessary truth, that which must be. The moral intuition yields conviction of the right, the aesthetic of the beautiful, the religious of the good, which is in God alone. The last which we have called spiritual consciousness may be questioned by many; but we venture to think that the truly spiritual man will both understand it and recognise its validity. In the deepest religious communion is there not a direct sense of the Divine presence? not a mere faith in God's existence, but an immediate per-

sonal consciousness of God which fills the soul with reverential and adoring love and joy? But even to those who cannot go beyond a strong faith that God is, we may illustrate spiritual consciousness. Whenever friend meets friend, is there not something more than that which the eye sees, the ear hears, or the hand feels, a consciousness of spiritual presence which is, indeed, meditated by the outward and visible, but which stops not there? From such consciousness comes our deepest certainty of honesty, of sympathy, of love; or, on the other hand, of hate, deceit and malignity. We venture to think that some of the deepest facts of our nature will be overlooked if we do not recognise this means of certainty.

These are our primary means of certainty. The truth reached through these may be expanded by various processes of reasoning, inductive and deductive. But the certainty of these results is never greater than that of the primary elements, and is always subject to the errors possible in the process of reasoning. Hence absolute certainty in reasoned results is possible only where the nature of the subject, the means of its apprehension, and the reasoning processes all admit of confidence that we have excluded error. Our best example of this is furnished by the pure mathematics. In almost all other fields the certainty of our reasoned results is one of degree; and as in practical life some element of reason enters into all our thoughts, even the certainty of that which we see and hear is qualified at least as a foundation for



scientific knowledge. Hence the absolute demand in the scientific field for *verification*. The seeker after truth has learned to doubt, and must verify his convictions or, as he modestly calls them, his first impressions, that he may arrive at more perfect certainty. This, again, does not invalidate our knowledge or destroy our faith in certainty. It only shows that all true certainty is to be attained by the exercise of the highest moral qualities.

There are three processes of verification employed, not only in scientific investigation but in the concerns of ordinary life in which we wish to reach a higher certainty. These are: (1) Comparison of different methods of observation or different observations leading to the same result. (2) Harmony of results. (3) Elimination of all contradictory hypotheses. Every school-boy is familiar with the use of these processes in mathematics. He uses the first when he adds his columns downwards to prove his addition, the second when he casts out the nines or adds remainder to subtrahend, and the third in the *reductio ad absurdum* employed by Euclid. The chemist verifies by repeating and by varying his experiments, the astronomer by finding that observation corresponds to calculation. In religious truth we shall find that verifications similar to these are possible for the assurance of our faith.

The seven primary means of certainty which we have enumerated are distinguished from each other by variation in one important element, that

of sensation or emotion. In vision among the senses and in pure reason the emotional element is almost entirely absent. In the sense of feeling and in the moral, aesthetic and religious intuition it is essentially present. Sir William Hamilton has propounded a law that in our cognitive faculties intelligence is in inverse ratio to feeling. This principle has been popularly applied to religious faith as a means of apprehending truth. A religious man is governed by his feelings, and hence it is supposed that his conceptions of truth are not trustworthy. To this it may be replied that Sir William Hamilton's law applies to reflective or reasoned cognition rather than to the direct intuition on which certainty is based. While the emotional element which accompanies intuition may exclude or interfere with a reasoning process, it does not exclude certainty. On the contrary, it renders it all the more certain. There is no uncertainty about a burnt finger, although there may be confusion as to how it happened. The certainty of the fundamental fact revealed in the intuition is increased, and not diminished, by the emotion or sensation which accompanies it.

We are now prepared to enquire which of these means of certainty are available for the direct and assured apprehension of religious truth? which for its verification? and which as contributory to it?

To answer these questions we must take a more definite survey of the field in which re-

ligious truth is disclosed and of the manner in which it has been presented to mankind. The lowest forms of religion will perhaps afford the simplest illustration.

The earliest element of any religious faith is the recognition of God in the great works of nature. The sun, the starry heavens, a great thunderstorm, a lofty mountain, will excite even in the savage a feeling of awe and a sense of a being inconceivably greater than himself. The most rudimentary and the most perfect religions unite here. This recognition of God is not a scientific or a philosophical apprehension of a cause or author of these vast works ; it is rather a feeling of a presence in them of an unseen being. It is not the work of reason predicating a cause ; it is rather an impulse to worship with reverential fear. This impulse precedes all investigation of science or reflection of philosophy. These may, in some minds, by producing a greater familiarity with the outward phenomena, diminish the religious impulse and apprehension. In devout minds, which penetrate more deeply, they will increase that apprehension, giving it only a more spiritual form.

If this is a true representation of the simplest and most universal appearance of religious faith, we can now analyse it as related to our sense of certainty or conviction of truth.

First of all, this apprehension of an unseen being is not the mere observation of the senses. He is not directly seen, or heard, or felt. We

see the lightning, we hear the thunder, we feel the pelting storm. But even the savage mind separates these from the object of which it is afraid. As soon as universal literature begins to express these first religious ideas in words, it makes these things seem the servants or the habitation of its God. "He shoots out his lightnings"; "He sends forth his thunderbolts"; "He rides on the wings of the wind." The senses merely give us the facts in which God is discerned. They minister to our religious faith, but do not directly produce it.

So again this religious faith cannot be ascribed to self-consciousness. This takes cognizance of it, assures us of its existence, and enters into it as it does into all other mental states and acts. But in all this it only helps into distinct spiritual existence that which has its own independent origin. Is then this apprehension of an unseen being the work of reason? We think not. First, it precedes the conscious exercise of reason. As Mr Watson truly says, no people have developed either philosophy or science except those who have been first religious. Conscious reason inquiring for a cause is a second thought; religion is a first thought. Nor is it that unconscious reason which governs even the most rudimentary thought, for this is a conscious conviction, or at least apprehension; that is, a mere order or form, controlling thoughts which have their direct origin in the senses.

We are thus thrown back for the origin of this



religious idea upon the next class of means of certainty, those by which we discern the great attributes of real being, beauty, right, goodness, and with that the total of these or God. Although we have named these as separate channels of certainty, yet it may easily be seen that they stand by themselves as a class. They apprehend spiritual attributes of being as the five senses apprehend material attributes. They pronounce judgment. It is right, beautiful, good. But this distinction of attributes and conscious judgment is like science and philosophy, a later work. Into it reason as well as the intuitive judgment has entered. But before reason and experience have enabled us thus to analyse and distinguish these intuitive judgments, there is of spiritual as of material things a mingled consciousness giving us conviction of a spiritual world. And as in the material world, the first indistinct impressions of our senses under the law of reason become convictions of definite attributes and of the unity of these in individual objects, so this first indistinct spiritual intuition becomes distinct conviction of definite spiritual attributes, and of the unity of these in "God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, Judge of all men." The conviction of spiritual truth or reality is thus perfectly analogous to that of truth received or reality perceived through the senses, and reason as a law of thought enters both the one and the other. There seems no reason for the rejection of the one rather than the other. We may, in

fact, verify the whole field of spiritual certainty by its analogy to that of certainty in material things, as has been done by Butler and Drummond. Still further, as we verify and correct the senses by each other, so also in the spiritual field we must hold our conceptions of right and beauty and goodness in harmonious relation, if we would apprehend exact truth. We have already spoken of reason as the means by which we first distinguish and then verify our intuitive perceptions, both of the material and the spiritual. Reason is that which gives us necessary truth, *the must be*. It calls all our thinking to obey *the must be*; first instinctively, then upon conscious reflection. Among the most unmistakable of these *must-be's* are that which links attribute to essence, and that which demands cause for effect. These are *the must-be's* which instinctively unify our sense impressions of material attributes in convictions of individual objects. Under the same law of reason men instinctively unite their apprehensions of spiritual attribute awakened in the presence of nature and history in the conviction of a personal God. And as the law of cause and effect unfolds our apprehension of the outer world into science, and verifies each element of our knowledge therein, so in the spiritual world the law of cause and effect plays a similar part.

Thus far we have traced our conviction of spiritual realities as mediated by the aid of material things: *i.e.* of facts apprehended by

the senses. We have seen God and the attributes of God only through His works, and in this seeing, reason and spiritual sensibilities have been united. There has been a vision of faith unfolded into distinct intelligence and strong assurance under the law of reason. We may now ask, Is a more direct vision of God possible? something which corresponds more closely to our relation to the physical world? A more immediate spiritual consciousness without the intervention of the material? If this is possible to man, it does not follow that it is a common or universal experience. In all nature it is the elementary or the rudimentary which is universal, the more perfect forms, the complete development is more rare. When Christ says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," or when John writes, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him," and again, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son," there is evidently reference to a rare and higher form of religious life. So again in the words, "This is eternal life to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." A careful study of the higher forms of religious life to be found in the history of the race will, we think, clearly justify the statement that such have attained to an immediate consciousness of the presence and favour of God, giving a full assurance of faith.

The immediate means of certainty in religion is thus not sense, nor self-consciousness, nor

reason, but faith ; at first, it may be, very dimly discerning God in His works and in His doing to the children of men ; but rising to higher perfection as we learn of Him from those to whom He has been more perfectly revealed, and finally yielding perfect assurance to those who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is only by the recognition of this capacity in man that we can account for the phenomena of religion as we find them in the history of the race, and to some extent in each person's individual experience.

If it be asserted that in these religious phenomena we have no trustworthy basis of certainty, the reply is that in this matter we at least have certainty, for certainty is a subjective thing, something manifest in consciousness. Unless the whole religious world are hypocrites and liars, they certainly feel confident in their religious faith. If the sincerity of their assurance is admitted, but the claim made that in such assurance they are deceived, then we can but deal with this religious assurance, as we deal with any other assurance, submit it to verification.

First, the test of numbers. One man may be deceived, all cannot be. In the experience of all the ages and nations who have been feeling after God and who have discerned Him, and the best of whom have come to know Him, there must be truth, unless we commit spiritual suicide and conclude that man was made to believe a lie.



Secondly, the test of harmony. The right and the good and the beautiful unite in God. They harmonise with each other. All religion has not been beautiful nor even just and pure. But wherein it has failed of justice and purity and beauty it has fallen short of religion. The perfect ideal of these three is one.

Thirdly, the test of reason. Reason builds with the materials afforded by these spiritual sensibilities as freely and as perfectly as with those furnished by the outward senses, and her most perfect science and philosophy unite the spiritual and the material world. God and the first cause are one.

Lastly, inasmuch as all certainty is founded on reality, as truth is the correspondence of our thought to reality and religious apprehension arises in the presence of outward things, then it may fairly be demanded of religion, that it be built on objective historical facts, and not upon traditional fictions.

The test of religion as true must thus lie :

1. In that it yields a true faith in God, leading to the full assurance of personal communion.

2. That in itself this faith yields the ideal harmony of the holy, the beautiful, and the good.

3. That it is reasonable, the faith of a rational being.

4. That it builds from historic fact.

## CHAPTER III.

### OF RELIGIOUS FAITH AND THE REVELATION OF GOD TO FAITH

WE have just said that true religion, or truth in religion, will approve itself to religious faith. It fits itself to faith as light to the eye. Before we can apply this as a criterion of religious truth we must inquire more fully into the nature of this faith. By faith we designate that act of the human spirit by which we apprehend God as the object of our religious feeling, worship and service. There is included in it our ideas of God and our relation to Him and His will concerning us. But it is the act by which we apprehend these ideas in the spirit of trust, of obedience, and of worship. It is therefore more than a mere idea of God. It is idea or truth passing into emotion, affection and will. It is therefore not a simple, but a very complex spiritual act or state. It includes in the first place the whole trinity of spiritual intuitions. It apprehends God as holy, as good, and as glorious. To this apprehension of God its moral nature yields obedient consent, its affections yield trust and love, and its emotions are those of adoring worship. Faith is thus related to the

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moral intuition, to the aesthetic, and to the religious. It fixes them all not upon an abstract idea or principle, but upon a person. In that person it finds its highest ideal of the right, the beautiful, and the good. And this faith in this apprehension of God brings us into His immediate presence, and is thus merged into and perfected by an immediate consciousness of God in and with us.

“ Faith lends its realising light,  
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly ;  
The Invisible appears in sight,  
And God is seen by mortal eye.”

But it will be seen that in the very origin of this faith there lies an element of cognition, an idea of God. This idea is created by faith in the first instance. In the presence of the outer facts of nature and history, faith first conceives this idea. “ That which may be known of God is manifest in them ; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead ” (Rom. i. 19, 20).

But when once these true ideas of God have thus become the possession of the race, and are handed down among men, they have power, on the other hand, to awaken faith. It falls to very few men to find God purely or originally by the light of nature, or even by the aid of the great historic facts of supernatural revelation. Such

original discovery of God and all additions to such discovery in new facts of history have ever been regarded as the result of a special divine gift to chosen men, an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But once that God has thus been revealed subjectively as well as objectively, the truth thus received becomes a possession of the race. And it of itself, through the same Divine spirit by which it was first given, has power to awaken the activity of faith. All other attributes of God, as well as His righteousness, are "revealed from faith to faith." That is, our knowledge of them springs out of faith and it tends again to beget faith. It is this relation of religious truth to religious faith which forms the basis of our first criterion of religious truth. It springs out of faith, it creates faith, it approves itself to faith as light to the eye.

But it must be borne in mind that this revelation is not apart from the Divine Spirit. If even this revealed truth is severed from its spirit and becomes a cold speculation of reason, it may lose all its power and become profitless to him that hears and to him that speaks. A theology that is without the living spirit has ceased to be theology. It is mere science or philosophy. And being completely out of its sphere, it is but a feeble imitation of these.

We must now turn to the objective side of this religious process. From our receptive side the entrance of the truth is by faith; from the Godward side it is the revelation of Himself to men.



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This revelation in itself may be regarded from a personal or from a world-wide point of view. There must be a personal revelation. As God revealed His Son in Paul (Gal. i. 16) so must He do in each of us. If we would have eternal life we must know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John xvii. 3). But this personal revelation of God to me comes through that which is wider and which belongs to the whole race. This wider revelation we are accustomed to speak of as made in God's works of Creation, Providence and Redemption, or in Nature, in human history, and in that supernatural course of events which centred in Jesus Christ—preparing for Him on the one hand and flowing from Him on the other. In so far as any religion is true it must be founded on the whole or on some part of this revelation. This revelation, as a reality, is founded in and is essentially composed of facts. A religion founded on dreams, or upon the fancies of a disordered imagination, or upon the fictions of a cunning deceiver, or upon the pictures of a brilliant poet, could never be regarded as a trustworthy religion. The prophet through his dream may come to a clearer understanding of the truth, and the poet through his imagination may clothe it in striking literary form; but its foundations must be in the facts which God hath wrought. Of the entire process of the objective revelation of God in historic facts we shall treat hereafter. At this point we emphasise the single element of fact. There is, of

course, a process of facts which are repeated in each individual life, and by which God is specially revealed to me personally. Such are the world around me, the heavenly bodies above me, and the events of my age and of my personal history. Happy is the man who is so influenced as to learn the lessons which these are designed to teach, and who recognises God in all his life. But the great revealing facts are matters of the past and matters of record. And so, when we come to a quest for true religion, the religions built on fiction must be set aside, even though they contain much truth borrowed from God's revealing facts, and our religious faith must build upon that which a rational and critical examination assures us to be real fact. In the inductive search for religious truth the process of historical criticism has, therefore, always had its place. We must test the facts upon which our faith is called to build. Paul himself recognised this when he said, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). The evidence and attestation of the facts upon which a true religion is built must be reasonably sufficient.

In dealing, therefore, with religious truth, next to the religious faith by which it is first apprehended as true, stands the historic reality of the facts upon which it is based. The facts constitute the objective revelation of God. The interpretation of those facts under the influence of the Holy Spirit gives us the recorded revelation. Into that

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record there may be woven allegory, parable, poetry or any other form of literary presentation which may serve to make the interpretation and presentation of truth more clear or more vivid to our apprehension. All these may be instruments employed by the revealing and interpreting spirit. It is, therefore, no discredit to a religion that it is presented in poetic imagery or in allegoric or parabolic form, or even woven into myth and folklore, provided this is not the foundation of the religious idea, but only a literary form of presentation. The extent to which our Lord used such forms is well known; His reason is also clearly given. It was because only thus could they grasp and carry away with them truth which they could not yet understand (Matt. xiii. 10, etc.).

The demand, therefore, for historical reality in sacred books is well founded. But if it is carried to the extent of pure literalism in all presentation, and to the exclusion of all poetical and tropical presentation, such demand may lead us to the most erroneous conclusions and to the most extravagant positions. It will inevitably lead to direct conflict of critical history with the Sacred Books.

The same principle also applies to scientific presentations of nature. The great nature facts lie at the basis of all religions, as they do at the basis of all forms of science. But in stating those facts as the basis of religious conceptions, it is not necessary that any religion should present us with an absolute science. Each age must natur-

ally use the language of its own scientific conceptions. The facts do not change, and in those facts all scientific conceptions, from the crudest primitive cosmogony to the most advanced modern scientific theory, will find a certain relation ; and with the change in the scientific conception of fact will come changes in the presentation of the religious idea founded in that fact. But the fundamental conception is the same, and child and mature man, savage and philosopher, may unite in thinking of God as the "Maker of all things."

Quite distinct from these investigations of true religious *faith* and fundamental historic *fact* is the question of harmony between the moral, æsthetic and religious intuitions, and their unity in a complete faith, and their further harmony with the necessary truths of reason. This last process in theology will tend, not merely to the verification or confirmation of faith, but also to its purification and its perfection. The process of degeneration in religious faith has, in all ages, been an easy one. So is it with all the highest forms even of material life ; so also with the more complex organisations of our social and political life ; so is it with even our intellectual forms of life. While a law of progress runs through the whole, it is through death to new and higher life. It does not, therefore, condemn religious faith that we find it, like the other highest things in the finite and, therefore, progressive universe, subject to decay. An important province of theology is

thus the purification of the popular religious faith, the separation from it of the accretions of error and superstition which are continually attaching themselves to the religious faith of all peoples. In an age of historical criticism there is little danger of the intrusion of invented facts. Spiritualism and Christian science may make the attempt, but with scarce even a transient success. In an age of evangelism and missions, living religious faith is doubtless making rapid progress among men. But it is needful to see that this living faith is pure and perfect ; that it includes the holiness, the right reason, and the beauty of the Divine character as well as His goodness. A one-sided faith soon passes into positive error, and very easily adds its own fancies and inferences to God's foundations. In the process of verification of religious truths, and especially under this law of verification through harmony of the true, the right, the beautiful and the good, it is the office of theology to seek for the pure and perfect truth on every side.

Our tests or criteria of religious truth as given by faith in the revelation of God may thus be reduced to a threefold classification :

1. It maintains a living religious faith.
2. It is founded in fact.
3. It presents the harmony of the true, the beautiful, the right and the good.



## CHAPTER IV

### SCHOOLS OR TYPES OF THEOLOGY

IN the history of Theology, as founded on religious faith, we find that the complex nature of a perfect religious faith has not always been recognised. Apart altogether from considerations which hereafter appear of the ruin of man's spiritual nature, and hence of the positive corruption of his religious life, the limitations and infirmities of our intellectual constitution give rise to imperfections in our theology. We easily fail to preserve the perfect balance of truth, or to attain, by means of that balance, to purity of faith. As example of this we have—

1. A rationalistic type of theology. This seeks to build our conception of God upon the basis of the necessary truth afforded by pure reason. Reason demands a cause, and God is posited as the First Cause of the universe. When to this conception of God is added evolution as the expression of the relation of all that is, ourselves included, to this cause, we have materialism, or pantheism, according as the first cause is apprehended as universal matter or as spirit. Even short of pantheism we may have a rationalistic

theology, which makes reason the larger element in our apprehension of God through faith. While the religious faith of a rational being cannot be irrational or contradictory to reason, and while reason thus becomes the purifier of faith by the elimination of all irrational conceptions, we must always bear in mind that, as in philosophy, reason is first, and the facts furnished by the senses or by the moral or religious intuitions are the occasion, and serve only to give direction ; so in religion the intuitive elements of faith, especially the religious intuition, is first, and reason is but a guide to discriminate the true from the false in the conceptions which they furnish. Any type or school of theology which neglects this, and makes reason the source from which, in whole or in part, we draw our religious conceptions, may fairly be designated as rationalistic. There is peculiar danger of falling into this error in our day, when the element of cognition is separated from the moral and religious and aesthetic intuition, and the term reason is made to cover the whole ground of direct cognition of truth, moral and religious, as well as purely rational. The rational idea of first cause is in harmony with the religious idea of God, but must not be substituted for it. It may, indeed, help us to enlarge and perfect our religious idea ; but rather, like the objective facts of nature, as the material upon which religious faith works than as a substitute for that faith. The same holds true in the finite field of science as in the universal field of philosophy.

2. A second one-sided type of Theology is the mystic. This is directly the opposite of the last. It exalts the religious intuition to the exclusion of reason, and with reason, generally the aesthetic intuition, and sometimes even to the detriment of the moral. The result is an intense faith—always narrow, generally burdened or overlaid with many superstitions, often irrational, and quite ready to oppose itself to both philosophy and science. It fails to recognise the legitimate demands of reason or its necessary presence in all forms of our spiritual activity. Its rejection of the authority of moral law is happily less frequent, though occasionally it proceeds even to this extreme. This mysticism in faith and theology becomes in religious life enthusiasm or fanaticism, and has given rise to the most serious practical consequences as well as to most dangerous errors. Here, as in other cases, the old adage holds good—the perversion of the best is the worst. This very form of spiritual activity which, when unbalanced by reason and conscience, leads into such serious error, is nevertheless the central element of all true religious faith; but it is so only in conjunction with the true, the beautiful, and the right. In the unity and harmony of these it grasps the highest of all truth and reality—God. Separate from these it is a blind feeling after God, sometimes imperfectly finding Him, often mistaking its own imaginations for Him.

3. A third type or school of Theology, opposed to both these, is that which builds upon authority.

This immediately divides into two: the school of ecclesiastical authority and that of supernatural authority. These, therefore, constitute not No. 3, but Nos. 3 and 4.

It will be seen at once that the relation of authority to our faith is not subjective and internal, but objective and external. In other words, authority is not an element of faith in itself or a capacity called into exercise when we believe, but an external power with real or supposed fitness to produce faith or an occasion upon which faith should be exercised. It is something outside of ourselves with a right to prescribe the substance of our faith. When we examine it more closely we find that this authority presents to us a form or rule of faith either in the creed of the Church (ecclesiastical authority), or in the teaching of men whose faith has been supernaturally directed (inspired men), or (the highest of all) of One who was Himself supernatural or, as He himself declared, one with God. The point of relation of these to subjective faith is the substance of that faith or our idea of God. And the very idea of authority is that there is an objective as well as a subjective verification of our faith. We can test our faith as true or false, not only on the basis of reason, and of conscience, and of personal religious conviction, but also on that of its agreement with the faith of the Church and of its agreement with that of apostles, prophets, or the Christ. This certainly is a proper verification. If I

doubt or distrust my eye-sight it is reasonable and wise to compare it with that of those who stand around me, or with that of one whose vision is known to be unusually perfect. Nay, more, such a verification is not only reasonable, but it is the only means by which we can reach the highest perfection of truth. The personal equation must effect all men in subjective verification. For perfect truth we must have a wider induction than that which is afforded by our own subjective experience. And such a wider induction we gain when, by a slow process of crystallization, the conceptions of successive generations of religious men form into a defined doctrine, and such doctrine is accepted and ordained as the creed of the Church. But while recognising that the result thus attained represents the most perfect human form of religious idea as truth, it must be borne in mind that its perfection is not absolute, but relative and progressive. History shows very clearly that the progress of doctrine is very slow, and that for the perfect development of a new form many generations of individual men are needed, and that when they finally culminate in new and more perfect creed forms they do so through great conflict. But with the exception of these crucial periods creed forms, when once established, possess a relative stability. But after all, their degree of authority is exactly measured by their truth. Their promulgation by ecclesiastical authority recommends them; it creates a pro-



bability in their favour ; it gives them right of way, so to speak ; it puts them in acknowledged possession of all the didactic agencies of the Church ; but it does not place them above the final criteria of all truth. All honest men must test that which they are asked to accept as truth. Still further, ecclesiastical authority cannot produce a living faith ; truth alone applied by the Spirit can do this. It is impossible to impose dogma by mere authority ; authority may create a dead acquiescence, it cannot create a living faith. That is the province of truth alone. The creed is worthless and powerless unless it is the expression of the living faith of living men ; and it becomes such living faith, not as creed or by force of authority, but as simple truth. True theology thus never reaches its proper foundation until it has sought out the ultimate tests of truth. To build its system upon creed, fathers, councils, or ecclesiastical decisions, is to build on the surface instead of digging down to living rock. Ecclesiastical authority may thus be a safe guide, but it can never be either a final or a safe foundation for our theology. If the object of theology is the exhibition of the contents of religious faith as a perfect body of truth, it can never rest satisfied with any prescription of the past, however excellent. It will always give these due weight and consideration. But each generation must, for itself, "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." Any other course leads not

only to stagnation and decadence in theology, but still further to the extinction of religious life and the conversion of faith into mere formal assent. A living theology and a living faith go hand-in-hand.

It would be altogether extravagant to apply these conclusions indiscriminately to the other form of authority—that of the supernatural. While they have important relations, the two are not necessarily connected. The Reformation was a revolt from a certain form of ecclesiastical authority, as well as a new resurrection to life from the spiritual death which followed the abuse of that authority; but while it rejected the authority of the Church, it held all the more tenaciously to the supernatural authority of the written word. Side by side with the right of private judgment it placed the authority of Scripture. This authority it proceeded to establish on the basis of the attestation of miracle and prophecy, and a mechanical or verbal theory of inspiration. The whole question of the office of the supernatural in religion and in revelation will be considered hereafter. We are dealing here only with its relation to the office and method of true theology. True theology is founded in living religious faith, and its office is the verification and purification of that faith; but living faith can no more be produced by the authority of a miracle than by the authority of the Church. Faith is not to be imposed by any constraint from without. Truth, and truth alone,

can call it forth. The great religious teachers, both of the Old Testament and of the New, recognise this, and warn us to try every man's work as a religious teacher whether it be of God. They warn us against lying signs and wonders (Deut. xiii. 1-3; Matt. xxiv. 24; 2 Thess. ii. 9-12). They thus clearly call upon us to test even the teaching which is enforced by the authority of miracle and prophecy, by the moral and religious character of the doctrine. If it is a doctrine of either unrighteousness or ungodliness it must be rejected. Not even a miracle can force either reason or faith to accept with living conviction of truth that which contradicts reason or our moral and religious intuitions. Reason and our moral and religious nature may be so confused by an apparent miracle that we may weakly yield assent to and obey a lie; but neither a true nor a false miracle can produce that living faith which takes hold of truth, and truth alone. The formal method of establishing the authority of Scripture which has prevailed in the last three hundred years is thus out of harmony with Scripture itself, as well as inconsistent with the true nature of living faith.

But we would do great injustice to the office and authority of Scripture if we supposed that because the feeble supports by which men have sought to prop it up are found to be useless, therefore all foundation of its authority was gone. Its true authority is based upon its power to create living faith. Whether as a spoken or a

written word, it comes to us "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." We shall see hereafter how that power is enhanced by the presence of the supernatural ; but to substitute the presence of the supernatural for the demonstration of the spirit within would be not to verify religious faith, but to destroy it by substituting an outward assent to a syllogism for the consent of our deepest spiritual being to the truth of God. The wise theologian will thus hold fast by the Word of God as an authoritative guide ; but he will receive its teaching as a living faith in his own soul. He will use it as a fountain of water of life, from which he may drink, as the source and creator of his living faith rather than as the mere textual test-book by which it is to be verified. He cannot long study the Scriptures without recognising that they represent *a perfect religious faith*, such as is to be found nowhere else. He will learn also that, in some cases, as in Paul and John, religious faith had already begun to construct a theology, so that here and there the theology of the New Testament does furnish a standard for our theology ; but he will learn as well that the vast majority of our modern theological questions were never raised in New Testament times nor by New Testament writers, and that what we call New Testament theology is in part at least our theology, founded more or less perfectly on the New Testament. The Scriptures are really the record of a religious life, founded on supernatural facts and created by supernatural,

spiritual influence. This religious life includes the ideas of religious faith as well as its affections and practical duties. There is in it only the beginning of theology that is of the reflective definition and collation of those ideas in a rational system. To use it as if it were a collection of theological commonplaces is entirely to mistake its true character. Scripture is the standard of our living faith. Here it is supreme. It thus gives us the elementary material of theology. It gives us this not as an abstract intellectual idea, but as a living faith in our hearts. It is this living faith which comes forth as theology under the guidance of reason. And when we bring this theology to the test for verification we can only do so through our moral and religious intuition. These must make theology a living conception on the one hand, and *interpret* Scripture, *i.e.* convert it into living conception on the other; and, by the aid of reason, discern their unity or divergence. The authority of Scripture does not thus override reason, or the moral or religious intuitions, but enters into unity of life with them. And any type or school of theology which builds upon the supernatural authority of Scripture in such a way as to place it in antagonism to reason and to moral or religious intuition must so far fail to arrive at perfect truth.

The true theology will thus be at once rational, intuitional, and scriptural. It will also give a respectful, though not slavish, deference to the admonitions of history. A failure to accord with



all these will ever be to it a note of warning. Contradiction of either of the first three will be to it a proof of certain error.

But in building its system of positive religious truth, it will build directly from its own vigorous living faith. It will carefully feed this faith upon the Word of God. And the elements of truth which grow out of this living process it will bring back again to the test, not only of the Word, but of reason and conscience. This may seem, indeed, to involve an impossible labour ; but the defined truth so won will abide the test of the ages, and will build and perfect the spiritual life of the world.

## CHAPTER V

### OUTLINE OF SYSTEM

HAVING thus defined our subject, our logical method, our tests of truth and the generic form of our work, we may now proceed to outline the order in which we shall pursue our investigation of theological truth.

1. We shall apply our tests of truth in religion for the purpose of determining the historic form in which true religion, and with it religious truth, exists among men.

2. We shall study the revelation of this truth and its preservation among men. This will give us the Doctrine of the Word.

3. We shall study the contents of religious truth in the following order :

1. God.

2. The world as related to God.

3. Man as naturally related to God.

4. Sin.

5. Redemption, including—

(a) The nature, office and work of Christ as Redeemer.

(b) The office and work of the Holy Spirit.

6. Personal salvation, including—
  - (*a*) The new probation.
  - (*b*) The estate of salvation.
  - (*c*) Christian ethics.
  - (*d*) Christian perfection.
7. The office and agencies of the Christian Church.
8. The kingdom of Christ.
9. The consummation.

## PART I

### THE INVESTIGATION OF TRUE RELIGION IN HISTORIC FORM

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#### CHAPTER I

##### PRELIMINARY

THEOLOGY begins with religion as an existing historic fact. It also assumes the validity of the certainty which we reach through moral and religious intuition, as the sciences of nature assume the validity of the certainty reached through the senses. It therefore takes for granted that there is truth in religion. Its first business is to find that truth, its second is to present it in rational form and verification.

Inasmuch as our ideas of God and our relations to Him arise in the presence of certain objective facts, if these ideas represent truth, the facts may be regarded as a revelation of God, or at least as the means of such revelation. Theology, therefore, in assuming the existence of religious truth assumes the existence of a revelation of God. The truth can be most perfectly found in its revelation ; and the quest for religious truth and

for true religion as the system which most perfectly possesses religious truth becomes the quest for the complete revelation of God, so far as that has been made in actual fact to man. If we are to conduct this quest by the inductive method, we are led at once into the field of historic religions and religious history. We can find the actual revelation of God only at the basis of a real existent religion or religions. And we can find the actual religious truth which exists among men only in the same field. Our first business is a survey of the existing religion or religions of the world, with a view to the discovery in them of true religion and religious truth.

Immediately that we address ourselves to this task we find that there are two possible methods before us. As there are a large number of religious systems in the world to-day and in past ages, we may adopt toward these either the eclectic or the comparative method. Following the eclectic method we may endeavour to gather from all systems whatever each may be able to yield of tested religious truth, and out of this construct our system. Following the comparative method we may place the existing historic systems side by side, and applying to them our tests of religious truth, endeavour to determine which most perfectly represents true religion and the most perfect revelation of God to man. This latter method we choose for the following reasons : (1) Eclectic systems are artificial, are lacking in unity, and hence are unsatisfactory and not permanent. This



is the case even in science and philosophy, although these are confined to the small number of men who attain to the higher intellectual life, and hence are better fitted to appreciate a judiciously constructed eclectic system. Religion, on the other hand, to obtain historic influence must command the faith of the great body of the people and so must grow up into their life. It may assimilate external elements, and it may even come to a people from without, but it must do so as a living spiritual power appealing to religious faith and conscience. It can never be imposed or even constructed by an artificial, intellectual process of eclecticism. An eclectic theology would not represent any living form of religion, and would so cease to be theology, and become a mere religious science or philosophy.

2. It is of the very nature of religion that it rejects eclecticism. All historic religions have been perpetuated either by the power of a living faith or by the help of traditional teaching. A living faith must find God directly in his revelation of Himself to the soul. It cannot build on the mere acceptance of the beliefs of others. Much less can it build by a selection of fragments of various religious faiths of the past. These can at best but serve to direct it to the fountain-head of light and truth. On the other hand, a traditional faith would cease to be traditional by becoming eclectic. The entire force of tradition lies in the sentiment of reverence for our fathers, and eclecticism implies an intellectual interest, which has already displaced that

sentiment, and is already seeking ways and means for new and better things. Hence it is not surprising that religious faith in either form is exclusive and asserts itself as a finality. Living faith in the common mind asserts itself with such power in the region of our deepest emotions that it is impatient of any intellectual questioning of its sacred things. And a dead traditional faith is equally intolerant of any interference with its quiescent and reverent acceptance of the teaching of the past. All nations have thus held to a faith in a true religion rather than to faith in individual elements of religious truth to be pieced together as each man may be able. It has thus been believed among all peoples that God has made a revelation of Himself and of His will to men; and that men, chosen and endowed of God, have been raised up to expound this revelation to their fellow-men, and that upon these apostles and prophets we must build as our foundation. In the field of religion it is spiritual death and not intellectual imperfection which results in final overthrow of a religious system. And when a new system comes forward, it is the work of a new spiritual life and not of a merely intellectual interest. This new life does indeed take up into itself the truth of the past, and adds to it new elements drawn directly from revelation. But it does so, not by methods of intellectual criticism and induction, but by the power of an inward living faith, which expands itself into a perfect body of truth by its own living

vision of God. Eclecticism is thus alien from the religious spirit in which alone theology can be properly studied.

3. While these reasons lead us to reject the eclectic method, we shall find, on the other hand, that the comparative method leads us directly to an existent religion, which stands pre-eminent above all others. Just as in science, the fruitfulness of a method is its justification ; so here, if the comparison of existing religions leads us at once to one which is not only the best existing, but also includes all truth to be found in any other, then there is nothing for the eclectic method to do. It can find nothing elsewhere to add to the sum of the truth already embodied in an existing living faith. On the other hand, the comparative method not only leads us to this highest existing faith, but also affirms important elements of that faith by the assent of other religions. It brings the truth which all contain to attest the important elements of this highest and best of religions. If in Confucianism and Buddhism we find important elements of moral truth, that fact attests such truth by the added assent of one-third the race, and so far affirms the truth of every other religion which embodies the same truth.

4. While this comparative method cannot demonstrate an absolute religion, or the absence from the best existing religion of any element of error or imperfection, it places us in the best position to give proper weight and consideration to the supernatural facts which may be adduced

to give our faith in this religion a still more exclusive character.

Turning then to the comparative study of religions in our quest for the foundation of a true theology, we may avail ourselves of all the scientific work which has been accomplished in this field. This will make it unnecessary for us to trace the origin or analyse the contents of each individual religion. The science of Comparative Religion has already examined for us the whole field, and has reduced the existing religions to such an orderly classification as will suit our purpose. The central characteristic of any religion as such is its conception of God. Even in our Christian world each man's religion may be measured by his idea of God. When the world's great religions are grouped according to this element we shall be able at once to deal with them as classes, for no religion which is founded on an erroneous conception of God can be in itself true; and the place of each religion in the ascending scale of perfection may be accurately determined by the same test.

On this basis we may classify the religions of history as follows :

1. Nature Religions, including the primitive religions generally.
2. Polytheism. This class includes such religions as those of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome and the northern nations of Europe. Many of these are associated with a pantheistic tendency in their philosophy.

3. Pantheistic ; emerging from polytheism and intermingling philosophy with religion. Such we have in Hinduism or Brahmanism. A strong tendency in the same direction appears in the later esoteric teaching of the Greeks.

4. Dualistic ; Magdaism.

5. Ethical and humanistic ; which may be regarded as attempts at reformation rather than as original religions. Among these we may class Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism.

6. Monotheistic religions ; Mohammedanism, Mosaism and Christianity.

Every known form of historical religion can easily find its place in this classification, and will suffer no injustice by being ranked and judged with its class.

In forming an estimate of the truth or falsity of these religions we shall inquire as to each class :

1. Has it created and maintained among men a definite religious faith ? and does that religious faith now satisfy the religious intuitions of humanity ?

2. Has this faith been founded on actual facts in nature and history ? and do these facts constitute an historic revelation of God to man ?

3. Is the faith so founded and created in harmony with our moral, aesthetic and rational convictions, and so verified to us as reasonable creatures ?

If, in answer to these questions, we find a religion actually existent among men, with power to perpetuate a living religious faith, a religion



founded upon the common facts of nature and upon assured facts of history, and a religion in harmony with the conscience, the sense of beauty and propriety and the reason of mankind, then certainly such a religion will have established a strong claim upon our acceptance as true. If further, upon examination, this religion is found to have arisen by an historic process, which has enabled it to take up into itself all religious truth which can be found in any other, and to add to this the highest conceptions of God as yet attained by man, then certainly such religion by this very fact establishes its pre-eminence.

Further, this pre-eminence may rise to the height of exclusive authority, if such religion can be shown to be the outcome of a line of historic unfolding, bearing the clearest marks of a special presence and working of God, who therein reveals Himself to men ; and that such revelation, while mediated by a special people and by chosen agents, has been prepared for the whole human race.

It will be seen that this entire view of the authority of religion to command our faith is based, not upon reason, nor yet upon syllogistic demonstration. It builds from our religious intuitions. It speaks to us words which appeal to our hearts as from God. Just as true moral teaching appeals to conscience, so this, to borrow the expression of Coleridge, finds me. The fatherhood of God revealed in Jesus Christ forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, satisfies my deepest spiritual need ; and when once it has been spoken

to me, my whole being accepts it and delights in it as God's own truth. It is a "joy unspeakable and very full of glory." This is the true direct universal demonstration of religion to men. It is in and of itself a perfect satisfaction, an inward witness of truth to the soul, the "demonstration of the Spirit." All else is reflective verification, useful in its own place, but not first or chief. Next to this demonstration of religious truth to our faith comes its foundation in reality. A religious faith founded on fictions is superstition. Superstition is nothing more or less than the religious emotions and ideas aroused within us by invented or imaginary representations. This has been the fertile field of priestcraft in all the ages. The historical criticism of the facts or records upon which a great religious system is built is thus as fundamental as the power of those facts to awaken our religious feeling and to satisfy our religious conviction.

The third line of harmonics will complete both the verification and purification of our religious faith. History will show us that there have been accretions to all religions, if not in their sacred records at least in their popular forms of teaching. Historical criticism and comparison with our sense of right, our sense of fitness, and our reason will do much to eliminate these.

Finally, in this investigation of religion as true, we must deal with it in its most perfect form, but yet not as a mere literary ideal, but as a living faith in the hearts of living men.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORIC RELIGIONS

#### I. *Nature Religion*

THE original forms of nature religion are no longer known as historical systems. All existing religions and all ancient religions of which record remains have already passed through a process of development. The lowest existing form of nature religion fetichism is evidently a decadence, in which religion, moral sense, and intellect have all suffered in common with the physical nature. Among tribes who have become abnormally feeble in body and mind, the religious instinct is little more than a blind dread of the great forces of nature by which they find themselves crushed.

A much nearer approach to a pure nature religion may be seen in the earlier religious life of India, described by Prof. Max Müller as Kathenotheism. The most ancient Vedic hymns which are at once the surviving record and embodiment of this religious spirit recognise and worship the Divine power in the various objects of nature, the sun, the sky, the rain clouds, the earth, the sea. But even here we find that inter-

mingling play of the imagination which subsequently culminated in mythological polytheism. Says Prof. Max Müller, in speaking of the objects of Vedic worship, "They are all still oscillating between what is seen by the senses, what is created by the fancy, and what is postulated by the understanding." "Monotheistic in the usual sense of that word it (the Vedic religion) is decidedly not, though there are hymns that assert the unity of the Divine as fearlessly as any passage of the Old Testament." After quoting a number of these, he goes on to say, "But by the side of such passages, which are few in number, there are thousands in which ever so many divine beings are praised and prayed to." Again, a very useful division of the Vedic gods has been made by Yaska into terrestrial, aerial, and celestial; and if the old Hindu theologian meant no more than that all the manifestations of divine power in nature might be traced back to three centres of force, one in the sky, one in the air, and one on the earth, he deserves great credit for his sagacity. But he himself perceived evidently that this generalisation was not quite applicable to all the gods, and he goes on to say, "Or, it may be, these gods are all distinct beings, for the praises addressed to them are distinct, and their appellations also." From this presentation of this very ancient religion, which lay on the border between nature religion and a definite and developed polytheism, we may perhaps learn something of the value of nature religion.

1. It is founded upon the manifestation of the Divine in nature, more especially divine power, wisdom, and goodness.

2. It implies the exercise of our religious capacity or faith toward these manifestations.

3. It is thus founded on fact, and involves a truly religious feeling.

4. But in itself it has served only as a foundation for the development of religious life, and as such has either been completed by more perfect revelation of God through the moral nature and in harmony with the higher reason, or it has passed into the next form of historic religion.

### *2. Polytheistic Religions.*

These introduce us fully into the region of religious history. In various forms they prevailed in India, China, and Japan, until in part replaced by Buddhism and the Confucian philosophy. They constituted the religions of the great empires of the Euphrates Valley, and of Syria, Egypt, Greece and Rome. They prevailed in Central and Northern Europe, and quite recently in Central America and the Pacific Islands. We have thus abundant examples of this form of religious life both in ancient and modern times. If we examine any one of these, we shall find the following general facts :

1. They are founded on nature religion, and so contain some measure of religious truth.

2. In their earlier history they maintain some strength of religious faith, and even some degree



of moral influence, in so far as the influence of the moral nature has been felt in their development.

3. But in their development we find an increasing element of error due—first, to the play of the imagination in giving them form ; secondly, to the decline of an earnest, moral, and religious spirit ; and thirdly, to the power of the human passions.

4. The result is that they become irrational, immoral, and irreligious. The course of their degeneracy is described with remarkable accuracy by St Paul in Rom. i. 19-32.

In many of these religions we find embodied important elements of moral and religious truth. They represent not only faith in a higher power, but also ideas of providence, moral government, justice, and a final judgment, with a future life connected by moral sequence with the present. The universal rite of sacrifice also implies some notion of propitiation and the forgiveness of sins. Such elements of religious truth, so long as they were held with a firm faith, influencing practical life, constituted a powerful influence for good in moulding the lives of these nations. But notwithstanding this, we find in every case a final collapse both in morals and religion. The cause of this collapse lies not in the inherent nature of religion, nor in its relation to morality, but in the method of its development, and in the consequent deterioration of the religious principle itself. The first and most obvious element in this deterioration was the division of religious faith among many objects. The

object of true religious faith must be personal. The words of St John, "We love Him because He first loved us," reveal to us the deeper nature of religion. It is not a mere faith in an unseen power, but a religious affection towards that power. Such affection in its very nature is reciprocal. To command our love, God must love us. Thus only a person can be the object of religious affection. And when, through the play of the imagination and the confusion of religious faith, gods are multiplied, each becomes a distinct personality. These separate personalities are consequently local and limited. The object of worship is no longer the eternal, the all-sufficient God. The confidence and affection inspired by such a being is correspondingly enfeebled, and religion dwindles down to the level of the human affections and passions. The step from this is very easy to ascribe to these gods the corrupt passions of humanity, and to create for them through the myth-forming fancy a fictitious history of the most absurd and even degraded character. When this stage is reached the collapse of the entire religious system, and with it of practical morality, is not far removed.

One of the most interesting features in the evolution of polytheism is the part played by the myth. The prominence of the myth in the polytheistic religions has in fact created an unjust prejudice against this primitive form of human thought. All nations have expressed their first ideas of science, philosophy and re-

ligion in the form of myth. The psychological basis of this form of thought differs but little from that which underlies the parable, the allegory and the metaphor, and the great body of our modern fiction and poetry. They all call in the aid of the imagination in the formation and expression of spiritual ideas. This form of mental activity always gives peculiar pleasure, and every child passes through a stage of mental development in which this seems his most natural mode of thought. Its danger lies in departure from reality, and hence from truth, by the substitution of these creatures of the imagination for actual facts. The creations of the imagination becoming thus not the adornment, but the very foundation of the science, the philosophy or the religion, the entire structure becomes unreal. The myth resembles in this respect the modern scientific hypothesis, which is a merely tentative method of presenting scientific facts. If the hypothesis is substituted for fact the science soon runs far astray. The collapse of all the ancient polytheistic religions was so complete, and the lesson of their history so obvious, that no one would look to them now as at all worthy of consideration by the seeker of true religion. Their congeners which have survived to our own day in no way differ from them. They have one and all lost the power of true religious life, have become immoral in their influence, have degenerated into physical and spiritual deformity,

have become utterly irrational, and have finally substituted fiction for fact, and lies for truth.

### 3. *The Great Sects.*

The failure of polytheistic religions has given rise at various times to great reformatations. These have been distinguished in a very marked way from the polytheistic religions both in their origin and method of growth. Polytheism has generally taken the form of a national religion, gradually unfolding with the laws, literature and civilization of each people. The relation of these religions to each other corresponds very closely to the ethnic affinities of the peoples ; and ethnology, comparative philology, and comparative religions or mythology are very closely related. They are all the outcome of the forces which mould the history of a nation. On the other hand the great sects have arisen at once under the teaching and leadership of some master-mind, who has devoted himself to remedy existing evils. Zoroaster, Gautama, Confucius, Lao Tze were such teachers and leaders. It is quite true that in every case the times were ripe for the movement of which they took the lead, and that its fundamental principle was already fore-ordered by the crying needs of the times. But, granting this, the directing power of a great personality appears as a most prominent factor ; and each system has received both name and form from a founder. The systems which thus in ancient times attempted to meet the want created by the decay and cor-

ruption of religion were Mazdaism in Persia, Buddhism in India, Confucianism in China, and Taouism also in China.

These systems all arose in the midst of a decadent, corrupt, and idolatrous polytheism. They were intended to meet, sometimes the religious, sometimes the moral, and sometimes the political want created by the failure of the old moral forces. Their attitude toward the old religions varied from utter rejection to easy toleration or incorporation as useful for the common people. But they all agree in this, that the old polytheistic mythology and idolatry forms no essential part of the new system. It is either discarded, opposed, ignored, or at most allowed to continue as a useful means to the end which they propose. This last applies more especially to the Chinese systems, which were rather political philosophies and politics than moral and religious systems.

The systems took form in the mature thought and deep personal experience of the founders. In each case they reflect the philosophy which they adopted. Zoroaster was a dualist finding the solution of the problem of evil and of man's moral history in the conflict of two great forces in the Universe, the spirit of good and that of evil. Gautama built upon the pantheism of the old Hindu religion. As a result, while the one retained the religious spirit and worship, the other retained only the spirit of reverence in the presence of the great problem of existence.



The four systems are ethical, but each with a distinct idea of the central idea in ethics. The ethical motive of Zoroaster was conflict with evil, and virtue thus lies in strong will. With Gautama desire was the fountain of evil, and renunciation of all desire becomes the way of righteousness. With Lao Tze, the natural method, the order of nature, the reasonable course is that to be followed. With Confucius the supremacy of duty, the obligation of every relation and of each particular station is to give law to our life. These central ideas are all ethical, and seem to reveal the fact that the failure of the old systems of which they were most sensible was a moral failure. They but very imperfectly express the truly religious hunger of the heart for a rock of eternal truth and right, of infinite strength and love upon which we may rest ; though they are not entirely without a feeling after this element also.

The systems thus constructed have had a history of about two thousand five hundred years, that of Zoroaster several centuries longer. Buddhism influences one-third of the race and Confucianism about one-fourth. The other two are confined to much narrower limits. This persistence through time and this wide extension of influence over so large a part of the race entitle them to careful consideration. Following our inductive method we can only submit them to the tests proposed for true religion, and seek the answer to those tests in the facts of their history. It must be borne in mind that in this review we pass no

judgment upon their merits as ethical systems. We are testing them solely from the side of religious truth and of their power to meet the religious needs of humanity. If we find them also failing to produce the highest moral results, it may prove that they are fundamentally defective in ethics as in religion, or that ethics and religion cannot be separated from each other, and that failure in religious faith means failure of moral influence and a resulting "moral interregnum."

1. Our first question then is, Have any or all of these systems resulted in the establishment and maintenance of genuine religious faith? This could be done either by purifying and revivifying the old faith, where the old religious forms and beliefs were continued, or by creating a new religious faith in the hearts of the people, where the old faith was replaced. In the case of Mazdaism we know so little of its remote history that very definite and certain statement of fact is impossible; but it is perhaps probable that the new teaching was accompanied with an awakening of not only moral but also religious earnestness. The character of the teaching indicates that there had been awakened a deep moral consciousness similar to that described by St Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans, and that this moral consciousness was associated with faith in a Higher Power and a sense of responsibility thereto. Man in his moral struggle was linked to unseen beings, between whom a similar conflict was waged for the final dominion of the Universe.

The religious side of moral life was further carried into a future life ; and what is still more important was associated with purification of the thoughts by the aid of the Good power of the Universe. It cannot be denied that the moral results of this religion on the lives of its little band of professed followers are such as to command high praise ; and its moral teachings approach more nearly to the standard of the New Testament than those of any other system extant. But while it thus proves its power to produce and maintain through long ages an effective religious faith, and while it has suffered less than any other religion of the same antiquity from the two great causes of decay, superstition and immorality, if we except Judaism, it has, like Judaism, lacked in expansive power. Its religious faith has lacked the vigour and enthusiasm which can go forth to conquer the world. It is now, and has always been, the religion of a small number confined to a limited territory.

The answer to the first question in regard to Buddhism may be much more concise. It is scarcely possible to describe the earliest and purest form of Buddhism as a religious faith. With regard to God or any conception of the unseen and Divine power it is silent. It resembles religion in its most spiritual form in that it deals with the facts of man's inner consciousness and with the great facts of human life, suffering, sorrow, and death. But it deals with these in themselves and in the human relation to

them, and not as entering into our relation to God, or to any unseen being, unless it be in its doctrine of transmigration. The end which it seeks is relief from sorrow and pain, and the way to that end lies through an ethical rather than a religious mysticism. The outward manifestation of this is in an ethical rule of life rather than in forms of religious worship. It is thus impossible to say that it ever established a living religious faith. The inner exercises of Gautama bear a striking resemblance to those of a seeker after God. But they reveal sin as misery rather than as exposed to Divine judgment, and his final escape from it is by the illumination of ethical truth rather than by revelation of the mercy of God. It thus appears almost as a parody of experimental Christianity. It renounces sin and self but to escape from sorrow, not to seek God. It casts out the desire of the world from the heart, but not to fill the heart with Divine love. To one or two of the earliest mystics it seemed to bring the desired rest. But to the vast multitude to whom it was most earnestly proclaimed, it held out an alluring promise which attracted millions of followers in many lands. But almost universally failing to bring them even to the peace of ethical, mystic enlightenment, it returned to the old ways of polytheism, made Buddha a god, and developed a mythology of Buddhas which once more became a fanciful superstition and a round of empty forms.

The work of Lao Tze was largely analogous to

that of Gautama, with less moral depth ; and it underwent the same transformation into a superstition probably largely moulded by contact with decadent Buddhism. On the other hand, the work of Confucius was of a more practical character, and without any element even of ethical mysticism. He was a practical teacher of the principles of right living. We do not find either in his life or teaching any evidence of the mystic, moral struggle. He takes it for granted that the right life is practical and practicable. He includes in that right life the ancient religion, but it does not appear that he infused into it any new life either moral or religious. It can scarcely be pretended that his system either created or maintained any new religious life or true faith in God.

Of all these remarkable attempts at reformation in the ancient Asiatic world, it thus must be said that as religions they failed, and certainly no person to-day seeking for right living relation to God would turn to anyone of them for the light of a true religious life.

2. It is scarcely necessary to apply to them our second test, are they founded on facts revealing God to man? They all deal with the moral facts of human nature, both those which appear in external history, and those which are felt in the inner experience of the human heart. But they have interpreted these so largely by the aid of rational speculation that they have failed to come through them to the living God. Only the first and the last of them have retained even



the simple elements of nature religion which were originally the common inheritance of the race.

3. Turning now to the third canon, their harmony with conscience, with our aesthetic sense and with reason, as the strength of all these systems lies in their moral elements, we are warranted in expecting that if a moral system could produce satisfactory results of right living apart from true religion, or even with the aid of imperfect religious faith, we should find such results here. But their history only furnishes proof that efficient moral influence must be built upon strong and pure religious faith. Mazdaism, the most influential and satisfactory in its moral results, is at the same time the most satisfactory and the most vital in its religious faith and in its teaching of religious truth. The others possess many beautiful moral precepts, and have grasped many far-reaching moral principles ; but without the regenerating and sustaining power of vital religion, they have failed to exert a growing and permanent moral influence in human history. They have lacked the power of ethical progress and, with that, of all advancement in civilization.

From the side of our sense of the beautiful and the fitting, they have given no high ideals, and have often clothed themselves in supreme ugliness ; and as regards reason probably no one would seriously profess to adopt their philosophy as a rational view of the universe.

*4. Monotheistic Religions.*

We come now to three historic religions distinguished from all preceding and contemporary religions by the following characteristics :—1. Each professes belief in one only true God, a Spirit, the Maker of heaven and earth. 2. Each recognises this one God as the God of all the earth, and each recognizes the others as believers in the one God. 3. Each has a known historic origin and a personal founder, who comes not as a philosopher or teacher or reformer, but as the bearer of a revelation from God. 4. Each claims to rest upon supernatural facts.

These religions are Mosaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism. Modern Buddhism in its mythological development has assumed some of these characteristics, but without their clear conception of a personal God, and hence it cannot be classed with them. Its claim to supernaturalism, and its attempt to engraft this upon the ancient faith of India, are so evidently later inventions, and differ so widely from its original teachings and history, that they do not call for consideration here, especially as they have not even yet constituted Buddhism a truly monotheistic religion.

In our study of the monotheistic religions we shall begin with Mohammedanism, as its origin and history are peculiar. It is the last important religious system which has arisen in the world. It is a composite system borrowing doctrines from the ancient Arabian polytheism, from Mazdaism, from Judaism, and from Chris-

tianity, but fusing them in the mind of the prophet in such a way that they bear the stamp of his peculiarly intense and fanatical energy, giving them unity of spirit, if not of logical relation. It believes in God, living, intelligent, and Almighty, in angels or spirits, in prophets of whom Mohammed is supreme, in an absolute Divine predestination of all things, in a future life, resurrection and judgment, and in the divinity of the Koran. Discarding the old idolatrous forms of religious worship, it prescribes prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimages and the propagation and defence of the true faith. Its moral teaching, while in many respects strict, in others is lax and on the whole inferior to that of the great reformatations of the ancient times.

Applying to it the tests of true religion, it certainly has created and maintained a most intense form of religious faith. It has shown wonderful power to propagate itself, prevailing now among one hundred and seventy millions of the race, and exhibiting fewer signs of decadence than most historic religions. It cannot therefore be said to lack power to arouse and command the religious faith of the race. It will also be seen that its creed embraces a large number of the most fundamental articles of the world's religious belief.

When we inquire into the facts of its origin, we find that it possesses the advantage of taking up into its creed the elements of natural religion, and also several of the more advanced doctrines

which appear in other religions as matter of Divine revelation. But it is absolutely without any trace of the discovery of truth by its founder through any original, religious illumination, either natural or supernatural. A religious mind either disordered or abnormal in its fanatical intensity has grasped such elements of truth often mingled with error as came in its way, has moulded them in its own forms of thought, sometimes narrow, sometimes distorted. It is thus a religious system fashioned entirely from borrowed material, which has added not a single true conception to the religious faith of the world. It derives all its distinguishing characteristics from the powerful, intense, but abnormal and fanatical personality of its founder. The crucial test of such a religion must lie in its answer to our third question, What is its relation to our moral sense, our sense of the beautiful, and to our reason? Tried by these tests, it probably stands inferior to Mazdaism and certainly to Judaism, from both of which it has largely borrowed; and so may be at once dismissed by the seeker after the highest form of religious truth. In it we see the religious spirit deformed into fanaticism through lack of moral, aesthetic, and rational guidance. The truth is found only in the unity of all these.

The systems which we have thus far examined represent the religious faith of the majority of the race in all ages of the world's history. To-day polytheism and the lower forms of nature religion command the faith of two hundred and

twenty millions, Brahmanism a more advanced polytheism one hundred and forty millions, Buddhism and Confucianism four hundred and eighty-five millions, and Mohammedanism one hundred and seventy millions; in all one thousand and fifteen millions of the fourteen hundred millions of the world's population. Were it not for the fact that these represent the various inferior ranks in the world's morality, intelligence, and civilization we might almost despair of finding truth in religious faith.

There remains but one line of religious history for our examination, that represented by the ancient Hebrew religion, with its modern developments of Judaism and Christianity.

*The Religion of the Old Testament. -*

Like several other forms of religion which we have examined, the religion of the Old Testament has direct historical connection with the revelation of God in nature which extends back into prehistoric time. From this it receives the fundamental doctrine of God, and ideas of providence, divine moral government, and prayer, and also some simple ancient rites of worship and a few early religious institutions. But it differed from the other religions developed from the revelation of God in nature.

1. In that it most distinctly distinguishes God from His works by which He is revealed.

2. In that it holds fast to the unity and personality of God.



3. In that it develops its religious conceptions in a more profoundly spiritual way, by personal communion with God, or by immediate revelation of God to the religious consciousness.

4. In that the moral consciousness acts in very close touch with the religious. These last characteristics served to check the mythological tendency with its intellectual and moral dangers. In placing the religion of the Old Testament in comparison with other religions we leave out of account for the present any claim to a supernatural character. Its claim to miracles may be well-grounded or otherwise, but with these we are not at present dealing but solely with its characteristics as a religion. Without entering into the details of its history, we think it will at once be conceded that it was far superior as a religious faith, in its moral influence and in its harmony with the highest reason, to the polytheistic religions by which it was surrounded. Even of the religions of the great reformatations, the only one which approaches it in depth of religious sentiment, in perfection of moral ideal and in doctrinal harmony with the highest reason, is Mazdaism, and this is rationally condemned by its dualism, and in its symbolic form of worship has tended to idolatry. But while recognising its superiority to other ancient forms of religion, it is by no means necessary to regard it as a perfect religion. Christ Himself taught that its elements of truth were abiding, and hence not to be destroyed, but to be fulfilled,

*i.e.* enlarged to a higher perfection. The great work of Paul was to separate Christianity from a slavish relation to its forms, retaining only its elements of truth (the spirit), while its imperfect forms, no longer sufficient for the higher truth brought to light by Christ were to be allowed to pass away. All this is consistent with the declarations of its own greatest teachers, who looked for a more perfect light of truth, as well as a mightier power of moral and religious influence, ministered by a Coming One who should introduce an age when all should know God, and the world be governed by righteousness and truth. The ancient Hebrew religion, whatever may be its comparative excellency, thus leads us to look beyond itself for the world's best and final religion.

It will scarcely be claimed or thought that this higher religion is to be found in Modern Judaism. In fact, it has never put forth such a claim. It professes only to abide by Moses and the prophets, and, except in a recent rationalistic form, it still awaits the Messianic age of light and truth.

We are thus finally led to examine the claims of Christianity, not merely as compared in itself with the great religions already considered, but also as the higher perfection of the ancient religion of Israel, which seems to stand superior to all its contemporaries, in religious faith, in moral purity, and in rational truth.

*Christianity as the highest form of Monotheism.*

No other religion more perfectly lays open its

early history than does Christianity. The person of its founder, the main facts of his life, and the first stages of the religion itself are all well known from contemporary monuments. From these historic sources we may make the following synopsis of important facts which exhibit Christianity as a religion :

1. It was the culmination of the most remarkable line of moral and religious preparation that the world has ever known.

2. In the person, life, death, and resurrection of Christ there is given a foundation for religious faith unique in human history.

3. It immediately builds upon this foundation a religious faith surpassing all others in its depth of religious conviction, its beauty of religious character, its simplicity and spirituality of religious worship, and its purity of moral life.

4. It develops further the most perfectly reasonable system of moral and religious teaching that the race has known.

#### *The Preparations for Christianity.*

The religious ideas of Judaism when Christ came were the most perfect known at that date. Its doctrines of God, Creation, Providence, Divine Law, Sin, a Future Life, a Judgment all illustrate this. They satisfied religious faith, moral sense and reason more fully than those of any other system. They were widely respected and acknowledged by thoughtful spirits among the Gentiles ; and the Jewish synagogues, wherever found in the

cities of the East, had become places of resort for earnest men who had lost faith in the popular mythology, and yet could not be satisfied with the teachings of philosophy. The synagogue thus prepared the mind of Gentile as well as Jew for the coming of Christianity.

While these religious ideas were by scribes and Pharisees overlaid with formal ritualism and intellectual orthodoxy, the deeper hearts of men were crying out for the true spiritual power of religion. This is seen in the success of the ministry of John the Baptist, in Simeon and Anna, and in the devout spirits, both Jew and Gentile, who so largely welcomed the preaching of the apostles. The true ideas of God and of sin had created a "hunger and thirst after righteousness," a crying out for true moral reconciliation with God, and a "looking for redemption in Israel."

Going back beyond the period of Judaism, we find that whatever it contained of spiritual life or of preparation for spiritual life, had been built up by the work of the Hebrew prophets. The spiritual results of their work are crystallized in the writings of psalmists and wise men from David to the return from the Captivity. These writings evince the keenest and most discriminating moral judgment, combined with deep religious feeling and firm grasp of religious truth. The teachings or discourses of the prophets themselves are instinct with moral and religious life, and with a faith always full of hope for the future as well as of strength and courage for the present.

The foundation of this entire process of religious life was laid in a still earlier religious work of Moses, founding the moral, religious, and political institutions upon which the prophets built. And this again forms almost uninterrupted connection with a primitive patriarchal religion of unique simplicity, beauty, and purity, combining in an inner religious life all the truth revealed to the first religious faith through the works of God in nature.

Christianity thus appears as the culmination of a constantly developing line of the world's purest and best religious faith, running back for several thousand years. It is further to be observed that in this remarkable preparation there was maintained a constant though variously successful conflict with the two disintegrating forces which were at work in the other historical religions. These, as we have seen, were the mythological and idolatrous tendency, and the tendency to moral impurity. These repeatedly attacked the religion of the Hebrews, or rather attempted to replace or overturn it. But they were as repeatedly overcome by the opposing force of strong moral and religious conviction, first in the family life of Abraham, then in the founding of the nation by Moses, and, finally, in the long struggle of the prophetic ministry, until the people return from the captivity with faith in the one God of holiness fully established. The contrast of this development with that of the contemporaneous polytheisms is most marked.



In this development the Mosaic and prophetic stages differ from the great reformations of other religions in the following particulars :

1. The development was entirely free from the influence of philosophical speculation. We have seen the influence of Dualism, Pantheism, and Scepticism in the great reformations. In every case they weakened either religious faith or moral conviction, or both. The nearest escape from this was the Persian Mazdaism, but even this lacked power for religious growth. The people of Israel were not without philosophical conceptions, but they were completely dominated by the moral and religious spirit. For example, we have in Genesis i. an orderly cosmogony, such as enters into the philosophy of other nations, and also into their religious mythology ; but here it is expressed as a religious faith without mythological embellishment. In the book of Job we have the discussion of one of the most difficult problems of ethico-religious philosophy ; but its final solution is reached not as an ethical speculation or theory, but as a religious faith. The other portions of the Hebrew sacred writings which approximate to a philosophy all proceed by intuitive perception of truth rather than by logical inference. Thus in their very form they are nearly related to religious intuitions, and are constantly intermingled with them ; they never become speculations. They express the direct insight of religious faith, of moral judgment, and of common sense. Without raising at present

the question of a supernatural revelation of God, we can at least discern in this history ground for the following conclusions :—(1) Granting that there is a God, and that He reveals Himself to men, here is a historical line of religious faith gradually unfolding from the purest early form of religion, and culminating in the most perfect historic religion existing in its time.

2. This line, starting from the same foundation of natural religious truth as the other religions, preserves and enlarges it, while the others obscure and lose it.

3. At the same time it maintains a growing harmony with the best moral and rational convictions of the race. It is into this line of preparation that Christ comes, and from it Christianity begins.

*Christ as the Founder of Christianity.*

Christ stands in the relation to Christianity not only of founder but also as Himself the foundation. As the founder of the new religion, He completes the ethical teaching of the law and the prophets which went before. This He does first of all by carrying the right back to the motive, the right heart, and then by presenting, and Himself creating, the highest of all motives, the religious love of God, as the supreme duty and the strength of all moral law. In this way religion and morality are inseparably united, and right-doing is no longer a secondary thing, a means to an end, but is in itself the natural

fruitage of the highest religious life. Much less is it a negative thing a mere renunciation. It is the highest positive spiritual activity. But this supreme form of religion is reached, not by abstract teachings, nor yet by the practice of prescribed forms, but by the full revelation to men of three great facts or truths, each of which has its practical and concrete embodiment in Himself. These facts were not altogether new to the world. They had already been partially revealed in other forms, or foreshadowed and promised under the law and the prophets. But now they were fully brought to light not only by but in Jesus Christ. These were—

1. The Fatherhood of God revealed in Christ, who announced Himself the Son of God and the Son of Man, and taught His followers to worship God the Father in spirit and in truth in these words, "Our Father which art in Heaven."

2. The reconciliation of the prodigal and lost children to the Father through this Son.

3. The indwelling of God by His Spirit in the hearts of all His reconciled children.

These things were not set forth as dogmatic teachings, but were embodied as concrete realities in the mission work and death of Christ, and were held forth as promises to the faith of His disciples. In the synoptic gospels especially they are never dogmatically asserted. It is only in the fourth gospel, in the light of a completely unfolded Christianity, that they are categorically presented. But they are all implicitly involved

in the life, works, and teaching of Christ as given in the first three gospels. His object throughout His ministry is not to present a body of teaching to a band of disciples, but to reveal Himself as a Saviour to lost sinners. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." "The Son of Man also hath power on earth to forgive sins." "This is My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins." We have only to add to such familiar words the equally familiar parable of the prodigal son, and the Christian prayer, "Our Father which art in Heaven," to complete the picture. And so it is completed by St John. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." "No man hath seen God at any time ;

the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

The third of our facts appears by way of promise. This promise was presented in the Old Testament, and repeated by John the Baptist ; "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." But it is linked with the Father's love by our Lord Himself, in a broad, general promise, "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The full expansion of this promise in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth of St John is familiar to all. It may be said all this is pure supernaturalism, which we are not yet prepared to admit. This we grant, and this we will consider as a true supernatural revelation of God presently. At this point we wish to prove only one fact, viz., that Jesus Christ presented Himself as the object of a new religious faith by which sinful men may be reconciled to God and receive the Spirit of conscious Sonship. Certainly this was a religious faith unique in religious history.

*The Religious Faith built upon this Foundation.*

We have already seen that the religious faith founded by Christ was not a mere system of doctrine ; it was still less an external organisation or society. As in His teaching He furnished elements of doctrine, so in His call of disciples He laid the foundations of a society ; but neither of these things anticipated the living faith. His



method was first the creation of spiritual life which He came to impart to men, and the life is left in turn completely to fashion the system both in doctrine and institutions. He certainly had before His mind the establishment of a spiritual kingdom, to be entered by repentance and faith, of which baptism was to be the outward and visible sign ; and in which all, as children of a common Father in heaven, were to be brethren, partaking of one sacramental table. And this gospel of the kingdom they were to preach to every creature. But these ordinances neither constituted the new spiritual life nor did they create it ; they expressed it, and they did not come into operation until the new religious life already existent called for them.

Nor was it a mere acceptance of His system of doctrine. Christ had set forth in His words and embodied in His work many wonderful truths. In these lay the elements of a great doctrinal system. But He made no attempt to elaborate such a system ; and it was only through long generations that it became formulated, and it may be questioned whether the formulation has ever adequately expressed the full truth embodied in the life. The first preachers proclaimed not a logical system of truth but Christ Jesus, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and repentance and remission of sins through faith in His name.

What, then, was this religion founded on Jesus Christ, beginning at the day of Pentecost ?

1. It was a spiritual thing. The third of the great religious conceptions of Christianity is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christ taught His disciples to recognise the inward revelation of moral and religious truth as the immediate work of the Holy Spirit who comes from the Father "to guide into all truth." The new religious faith was such a revealing, which came to one hundred and twenty persons who fifty days after the death of the Master were assembled in an upper room for prayer. This enlightenment was personal ; it came to each of them, and henceforth no man was recognised as born into the kingdom until he had received this gift of the Holy Spirit. It was first a moral enlightenment, revealing sin and judgment, and man's moral relation to God. It was next a religious enlightenment revealing Christ as the Saviour from sin, the forgiveness of sins, the fatherhood of God, from which revelation sprang "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." This inward experience was the new religion, and it has been the true essence of Christianity from that day to this, "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

It will be seen that the religion thus founded is as unique in its character as is the person of its founder as the object of religious faith. In some other religions we have some faint approaches to what is here set forth. In all we may discern a blind and almost helpless groping after it. The great enlightenment of Buddhism was a mystic

experience, but it reached only to the moral understanding, and did not profess to bring men into personal communion with God. The mysticism of all other systems has been set forth as the esoteric privilege of the few. But here is grace not only offered but received by countless numbers, not of learned men or recluses, but of the common people, the toiling, suffering masses of humanity. It verifies the words of Christ, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." That which is most nearly akin to it in religious history is itself almost a part of it, professedly the work of the same spirit, viz., the prophetic inspiration of the Old Testament. We are not now concerned to ask, were these remarkable phenomena natural or supernatural? All that we need to know is, were they facts? They have been so frequently repeated in the history of Christianity, even in our own age, that their reality can scarcely be questioned. The real Christianity of to-day consists of living souls who have this spiritual life within. Let us then in the light of those facts submit it to our tests of true religion.

1. Christianity is not only a vital religious faith, but it affords a fulness and perfection of that faith unknown in any other religion. In its ideal form it is toward God, perfect faith, perfect hope, perfect love. The first is a firm foundation of strength for life; the second is a fountain of joy and an inspiration to eternal progress; the last is the holy impulse of all

highest and best living. No other religion combines all these and presents them in their perfection as the ideal of religious life for all humanity. It is true that this ideal has not been perfectly realised, because Christianity, like all other religions, has been subject to the forces in humanity which make for the worse. Superstition, error, sin, and the secularization of life, have marked the best Christians with religious imperfection, and have often reduced the Christian faith of large bodies of its professors often for long periods of time to a dead form, and sometimes have made it a cloak for hypocrisy and sin. But notwithstanding all this, no other religion will for one moment bear comparison with it, as maintaining in the hearts of a large number of men in all ages a living, strong religious faith of a type far higher, and practically far more perfect than the world has known elsewhere. This will appear much more distinctly when we come to deal with its moral, aesthetic and intellectual results.

As a result of this Christianity has evinced a power of diffusion by purely spiritual forces unsurpassed in any other religion.

To estimate this aright we must bear in mind that Christianity, more than any other religion, crosses the natural inclinations of humanity. It opposes its selfishness, vanity and pride. It utterly condemns its desire for revenge. It puts a strong curb on all its passions and appetites and on its ambitions. It often calls for extreme

self-sacrifice and suffering. And in its very nature as a personal religion and a religion of the heart it cannot be propagated by force or by political authority or treaty. To be really spread it must secure the assent of the understanding, the conviction of conscience, and what St Paul calls the obedience of faith. As an outward profession it may pass from generation to generation by hereditary influence and education. But as a living, religious faith it must take possession of the spiritual nature of men individually. Its true spiritual power of dissemination and perpetuation is therefore to be measured, not by the number of nominal professed adherents which it may have gained, but by the number of men whom it has brought under the power of its living spirit, and whom it has moulded in character and life more or less perfectly to its high ideal. Estimated by this standard, no other religion of this or any other age will bear comparison with it. But even in its formal and professed extent of influence it equals the most successful religions that the world has known.

The power of Christianity to create a living, religious faith in the hearts of men, is set forth in the triumphant language of Paul. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ;" and, again, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." This power to produce religious faith was seen in the apostolic



age at Pentecost, in Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Corinth, Ephesus, and to distant Illyricum. And it is equally manifest in our day in every misson field. The North American Indians, the Pacific Islanders, the people of India, China, Japan, Madagascar, South Africa, and even Greenland, have in turn afforded the most triumphant proofs of its religious power. The great religious movements of our century which have multiplied the number of earnest living Christians a hundred-fold, especially in Britain, America, and Germany, add to this weight of evidence.

Nor is the religious faith thus created of an inferior or superficial type. From Peter, Paul, James, and John, to Rutherford, Wesley, Fletcher, Keble, Havergal, or Booth, its examples of religious life stand unsurpassed in perfection of religious character. They illustrate every element of true religious faith and especially such as these :

1. Deep spiritual communion with God.
2. Loving consecration to all good work.
3. Courage and fortitude in difficulty.
4. Patience and sweetness of spirit in sorrow.
5. Triumphant victory in death.

Christianity as a living religious faith is unique in its power of revival. This is perhaps the clearest evidence of its power to maintain true religious faith among men. Like other religions it has again and again suffered decay. The moral corruption attendant upon increase of wealth has

destroyed its life. The worldly ambition of its leaders and teachers has robbed it of its spirituality and prostituted its institutions to be ministers of human ambition. The influx of superstition consequent on the decay of intellectual life has perverted the very springs of its spiritual life. And thus cold ages of formalism, and dark ages of superstition, and struggling ages of entangling political strife, and sceptical ages of decline of religious faith through lack of spiritual power have marked its history. Similar facts appear in the history of other religions. But when once they fall they never rise again. They may have been able in their first strength to maintain some degree of religious faith; but such has been their inherent imperfection that they cannot be resuscitated and fitted to the life of a new age. The religions of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, and Northern Europe, and of the Pacific Islands, have passed away forever. And under the touch of the modern spirit Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are already doomed. A hundred years ago the same was predicted of Christianity. But at that very time, as in the apostolic age, in the lowly hidden places of England, Germany, and America, there was being kindled a revival of spiritual life which has multiplied the number of living Christians a hundredfold and filled the world with missionary zeal and conquests. No one who has grasped the inner significance of Christianity can doubt that it is as mighty to create and maintain and spread abroad spiritual

life in the world as it was eighteen hundred years ago.

2. This religious faith is founded in historic facts. We have already seen that a religious faith founded on myths (not as an expression of fact, but conceived as being themselves historic fact), or founded on fictions, the creations of the imagination, whether dark and superstitious, or beautiful and artistic, or cunning with priestcraft, must eventually fail. The falsity will sooner or later come to light and then the whole fabric will collapse. This will always be followed by an eclipse of faith but never by its extinction. As moral corruption may overthrow a civilization, but does not devote the race to perpetual barbarism, so faith in God, however buried under the wreck of human superstitions, will rise again. In our age the critical spirit has made strong assaults upon the historic foundations of Christianity. Around these foundations, without doubt, there has been accumulated, especially in the dark ages, a large amount of tradition and theory, conserved with superstitious veneration. In spite of all our pious fears, advancing intelligence must sweep this away. Christianity did the same for Judaism to an extent which we in our zealous repetition of the work of the old scribes and elders have utterly failed to appreciate. It consigned the old forms to their actual and necessary decay, while it preserved the living spirit. It distinguished the "holy seed which is the substance thereof" from the fallen trunk of the

ancient oak. It made no attempt to put the new wine into the old bottles, though Peter loved the old wine and could with difficulty relinquish his old bottles.

When therefore we claim for Christianity foundation in historic facts, we are not unmindful of the claims of modern, historical criticism. But it is not necessary that for the purposes of our present investigation we should enter into this difficult arena. We are quite prepared to accept all that a truly scientific criticism may find to be established truth, and we have no fear that it will affect the historic foundations of our faith. There doubtless is a human side to every part of Scripture, both Old Testament and New. And that human side has its limitations and imperfections. But they never can overturn the few simple facts on which the Christian faith is built. These facts are all embodied in the four books of the New Testament which even the most radical criticism acknowledges to be genuine. More than that they are embodied in the entire tradition, teaching, institutions, ordinances, and life of Christianity, from its first appearance in history downward. Nay, more still, they are attested by the best external, historic evidence of the age. These facts are the historic Christ, His personality, His life, His death, His rising again, and the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. We are not for a moment prepared to relinquish our written gospels, but we wish here

to point out emphatically that these facts do not rest on the testimony of the Gospels and Acts alone. No conclusions that can possibly be reached by trustworthy criticism can for a moment impugn the fact that Christianity is a faith which apprehends God as revealed in the life, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in one word in the personality as well as the teaching of Christ, expanded by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. So long as this Christ remains as a real historic person, so long as the records even of the second century remain, so long does it remain an indisputable fact that Christianity was from the beginning a living faith in Christ as the Divine Saviour and in God as revealed in, and by Him. The religion was from the beginning not founded on the Gospel books, but upon the facts which they narrate. The religion is itself a witness to the truth of the books.

It is on this basis that Paul puts forth two facts beside the personal Christ as fundamental to our faith, His death and His resurrection, not that the other facts are therefore doubtful, they are all in harmony with the personality which created a faith in himself as come from God. Without the full gospel record, the personality, and the fundamental facts of the resurrection would in our age have grown dim and shadowy. The records bring before us the full, living Christ. But the living faith of the apostolic age and of our age rests upon



no one incident of the narrative apart from the resurrection, but upon the living, personal Christ who died for our sins and rose again. In this personal Christ whose actual appearance in history no sane man can doubt, the men of His own age found the conception of God and of our relations to Him which constitutes the living Christian faith. This sublime ideal of God and man and spiritual life was not created by cunningly devised fables.

3. But this last thought brings us to our third test of religion, the harmony of this faith with conscience, reason, and our sense of beauty, *i.e.* with the three co-ordinate elements of our spiritual being.

*Christianity and our Moral Nature.*

The Founder of Christianity Himself instituted this test, "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." By the entire answer therefore of Christianity, both in its teachings and in its results, to the demands of our moral nature, we may judge of it both comparatively and absolutely.

The following facts present the answer to this question :

1. Christianity alone begins by uniting in the fullest measure at every point religion and morality. God is holy and just and good.

The moral "law is holy and just and good." Every one who would serve God must work righteousness. "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." This moral conception is carried into every aspect of religion, and no single instance can be adduced in New Testament Christianity opposed to it or even in the slightest degree at variance with it.

2. The ethical ideal thus made an essential part of religion is the highest and most perfect type of moral law. It is complete duty to God, to man, and to ourselves. Even unbelievers must acknowledge that the most perfect and all comprehensive morality the world has known is to be found in the New Testament; the ethical principle of modern science, uncompromising fidelity to truth and fact wherever found is anticipated and taught here.

3. The perfect law of right is embodied in the concrete form in the life and character of Jesus Christ. Christ's personality we have seen to be the very foundation of Christianity. What He was, what He did, what He said, these were the historic facts which lay beneath this new faith in God. But as that faith apprehended a holy God, so the Christ of the Gospels is holy. He Himself appeals to the most searching criticism of His enemies, and says, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" His disciples, men of far more than ordinary moral discernment, spoke of Him as "the holy and the just," as "holy, harmless,

undefiled, and separate from sinners." In this respect Christianity stands alone among religions. It alone sets forth a perfect living type of both ethical and religious manhood.

4. It lays the foundation of religious life in a deep, personal sense of the evil of sin, and in a complete repentance, which is renunciation of sin. This is the perfect work of its moral teaching. Other systems do this because of the pain or sorrow of sin, Christianity because of the badness of sin. But in the Christian life this principle is not merely negative. Consecration follows and completes repentance, and binds man to all duty as a condition of communion with God. These conditions of repentance and consecration are not merely initial, they are continuous through the whole Christian life. They are a part of religion ; we abide in the right relation to God only in this state of mind, not as a condition only, but as a part of our religion.

5. Its fundamental principle of the Fatherhood of God and of love as the relation of this father to man and of man to God is the highest and most powerful motive to all right-doing, and is itself the perfect right ; "Love is the fulfilling of the law." It requires but a little discrimination to distinguish a higher and a lower plane of moral life. Conscience, the moral imperative, is right, but the love of goodness which "makes our willing feet in swift obedience run" is still more perfect right. The love of God is the love of all goodness, for God is good.

6. It has improved and in many cases regenerated the institutions of our modern society in Christian lands. It has influenced our laws, national customs, commercial and industrial institutions and social and domestic modes of life. It has elevated woman and has made the family relation most blessed. It has ennobled and purified literature. It has ameliorated war, abolished slavery, and founded public charities in forms unknown outside its influence. All this has been accomplished, not by external force or authority, but by the creation of conscientious convictions in the minds of the great body of the people, leading slowly, yet surely, to the needed reforms.

7. It has produced the grandest types of individual moral character that have appeared among our race. These have been at once the world's most perfect examples of religion and of morality. There have been, it is true, remarkable examples of devout men living noble lives of high moral excellence under other systems. But of these, if we set apart those belonging to the Hebrew faith, we will find them outnumbering all others taken together. But in the line of moral and religious worthies the first two centuries of Christianity could easily outnumber and outrank all that could be named from the world's preceding history. The present century of the Christian world, in examples of the highest and most perfect life founded on deep religious faith, can outnumber tenfold and outrank almost immeasurably all that the world has produced outside of

Christianity in all the ages. And in many of these, as Howard, Havelock, Lincoln, Gladstone, Nightingale, the religion, though deep and sincere, has been quiet and unobtrusive, the noble life alone being prominent.

8. It maintains unflinching and perpetual conflict with all wrong ; hence the presence even in Christian lands of things evil is not an objection to Christianity, unless it can be shown that the system itself is in some way allied to them.

9. Its final ideal of the world's future is a reign of universal righteousness, and consequent human wellbeing. It calls all its followers to work for this, and it every year consecrates millions of money and a vast army of workers to this end, maintaining all the world's most beneficent and powerful organisations for the good of humanity and the promotion of right and truth.

10. If we place together the best that has been accomplished by all other religions combined, they are but as a drop in the bucket in comparison with these moral influences, agencies, and results of Christianity. It stands so pre-eminently above them all that comparison is almost needless. These things, too, are self-evidencing. They are "known and read of all men," and they form our strongest practical evidence, not only of the superiority of Christianity, but even of its divinity. The majority of men do not enter upon either philosophical or critical questions ; that which satisfies both their religious and their moral nature is to them essential truth, and rightly so.



*Christianity and our Æsthetic Nature.*

Closely related to that moral nature by which we discern the right is that power by which we judge of the beautiful, the fitting, the harmonious. Sometimes this sense almost passes into a sense of duty. It always lays the foundation for desire as a motive to action. If the beautiful is not always an imperative duty, it is at least always exceedingly desirable, and the neglect of it is a mark of degeneracy near akin to sin. It is therefore not at all surprising that in all ages the better elements of religion should relate themselves to the beautiful, and should call its forms into their service, as a fitting method of expression. In fact, these elements have created conceptions of beauty reaching beyond the material or the intellectual into the purely moral and religious sphere. Scripture itself speaks of the Beauty of holiness, rejoices in the holy and beautiful house, and mourns over its destruction. Paul himself exhorts us to follow after the things that are lovely and of good report, *i.e.* command our respect and admiration, and frequently uses that grand old Greek word *καλος* to express that which is morally and religiously good. The classic *καλοκαγαθος*, the beautifully good, expresses the same idea in its earlier form where it was the title of the noblest men.

It is in harmony with this that the fine arts, poetry, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture, which arise from and minister to our sense

of beauty, have in all ages allied themselves to religion, and have been largely created by it. On the other hand, the moment that religion begins to delight in the absurd or the grotesque, or in the ugly, decadence in the religious spirit itself is already at work.

All these facts make it evident that we are not stepping aside from legitimate argument in seeking one verification of the essential truth of religion in its relation to our sense of the beautiful. A religion which consecrated ugliness would be, by that fact alone, very largely condemned. We have seen that other religions have possessed elements both of moral and religious truth, though often degraded and contaminated by irreligious and immoral conceptions. We shall not be surprised, therefore, to find that they have also their ideals of beauty. Doubtless the most perfect of these has been the Greek art. That art has been largely preserved to us in three forms, poetry, architecture, and sculpture, and in the old world we have many collections which fairly represent its spirit and its glory. As art, *i.e.* as the perfect expression of the ideal, it has perhaps never been excelled. But beauty lies not chiefly in the art, but in the ideal which it expresses.

All art has three fields :

1. The physical, that which appeals to the eye or ear.
2. Passion, the field of pure humanity.
3. The moral and religious.

Now one has only to walk through a gallery containing masterpieces of Greek art to see that its glory lies in the first and second fields, and that while it expresses many fine ideals in the third, on the whole it is lacking in the highest. Walk through a gallery representing our best Christian art on the other hand, and its glory stands revealed as pre-eminent in the moral and spiritual field. The same is true in poetry, while in music the field is almost entirely left to Christian art; and the best and highest forms are consecrated to religion. In illustration of this whole volumes might be written.

The Christ in art alone would furnish material for extended study while Christian poetry and music open a boundless field.

The conclusion is thus evident :

1. That Christianity in itself ministers to and develops in the highest degree our sense of beauty.
2. That it is itself beautiful, affording to art its highest ideals of moral and spiritual beauty.
3. It is thus in harmony with the truth revealed by our aesthetic sense as well as that revealed by our moral sense; and as all truth is one, it thus proves itself to belong to the unity of truth.

### *Christianity and Reason.*

The most fundamental demand of our reason is cause. The second is for the law or order in which cause works. The discovery of these in the local field constitutes science, in the universal field philosophy. Philosophy seeks the first cause

and the relation of all things thereto. If the First Cause of the Universe is at the same time the object of our religious faith, then philosophy and religion are parallel, philosophy investigating first cause by the light of reason, religion by the light of faith. Each from its own standpoint and by its own methods leads us to the same supreme object. How do the results harmonise? The true philosophy and the true religion should meet in the common unity of truth.

In all ages religion has preceded philosophy, just as in the individual the development of the moral and religious nature follows the sensuous, and precedes the unfolding of the higher reason. Many have therefore contended that the development of a philosophy without religion is an impossibility. Certainly we have no example of such a thing in the world's history. But, on the other hand, philosophy can no more supersede our moral and religious nature, than it can supersede the use of our senses. The senses, the moral nature, the religious nature, the sense of beauty, and the reason are all means of arriving at truth ; each has its distinct field ; and all are in harmony with each other, and may verify and support each other, or, where error creeps in, may serve to purify each other. The history of Christianity in our own age has exhibited in a remarkable degree the influence of reason and common-sense in removing many erroneous conceptions which had attached themselves to religion.

In comparing Christianity with philosophy we

cannot step out of our proper field of religion and inductive theology to construct a philosophy. That belongs to another line of thought. We can only classify the existing systems of philosophy, ascertain the fundamental principles of each, and ask if anyone offers us substantial harmony with religion. Claiming as we do, co-ordinate authority for our religious nature as a means of reaching truth, we need seek only harmony ; we cannot make any system of philosophy the test of religious truth, nor can we consent to build religion upon any philosophy.

The systems of philosophy developed by the human reason may be classified as follows in their relation to religious faith :

1. Agnostic.
2. Materialistic.
3. Dualistic.
4. Pantheistic.
5. Deistic.
6. Theistic.

The whole field of rational speculation in so far as it relates to the first cause of the Universe is covered by this classification. Further, these classes are in themselves mutually exclusive. They each admit of no compromise with the others ; if one is true, all the others must be false, as will appear from the following ascending series of logical contradictories :

1. The first cause must be within reach of our knowledge, or not so.
2. The first cause must be one or more.



3. The first cause must be matter or not matter, if one.

4. The first cause must be personal or impersonal.

5. The first cause in relation to the Universe must be transcendent or immanent.

This series involves the fundamental questions of Ontology, and lays the foundations for the fundamental questions of Ethics as well.

Without attempting either the solution or even the discussion of these various problems, we may point out their relation to religion in general and to Christianity in particular.

1. First of all, universal religion asserts or assumes that God may be known, not necessarily through the senses, nor yet by the pure reason, but by the intuition of faith. A philosophy may therefore admit the impossibility of knowing God by its purely intellectual processes, and yet admit that God may be known in another way; and here we may place Kant. Only an absolute agnosticism contradicts religion.

2. The Christian religion and all higher forms of religion assert that God is one. It is scarcely necessary in this age even to mention the ancient systems of dualism which contradict this. They are now discarded by all philosophy as well as religion.

3. Christianity in common with all higher forms of religion conceives of God as a spirit. At various periods in the history of human thought materialistic philosophies have arisen

which contradict this, and find in matter alone "the promise and potency of all that is," or is to be. For our purpose it is sufficient to point out that the most widely accepted philosophies of the modern world, of the middle ages, of the Græco-Roman civilisation, and of the ancient Indian civilisation have accepted a spiritual interpretation of the universe. This may be taken as sufficient to prove that religion and the Christian religion in asserting the spirituality of God is not at variance with human reason. In fact it may be affirmed with no little show of truth that pure reason has never constructed a materialistic philosophy. Its true origin is the scientific observation of matter, and the substitution of its inductions for pure reason.

4. The Christian conception of God is that of a spiritual being personally distinct from the Universe, whether of mind or of matter, which He has created. This conception of God lies in the very nature of religion which includes my personal relation to a personal God whom I love and serve. In so far as religion and ethics are united in a sense of moral responsibility to God, it is also included in such a conception of morality. Our own distinct personality is further included in any form of moral responsibility whatever. Such personality, whether of God or the creature, and such clear distinction of God from His creatures is contradicted by the pantheistic philosophies. It cannot be denied that this form of philosophy has prevailed very

extensively both in ancient and in modern times, and has given rise to the most important objections which philosophy has interposed to religious faith. Kant himself solved it only by severing both ethics and religion from pure philosophy, and relegating both to the practical reason. But this very position of the prince of modern philosophers proves two important points :

1. That he recognised no contradiction between the pure reason and the moral and religious intuitions. This alone might be held sufficient for our purpose. The relation of reason to this truth is only zero. It is not that of a positive contradiction. They are not within the content of reason according to Kant's conception of it. But they are not thereby irrational, *i.e.* contradictory to reason. The knowledge furnished by the senses is similarly outside the content of the same pure reason, but science is not thereby pronounced irrational or contradictory to reason.

2. He recognised the validity of other forms of thought beside those furnished by the pure reason. He did not deny the validity of science on the one hand or of moral and religious truth on the other. He simply separated these from universal and necessary truth, the truth which must apply to all being as being, whether that being be mind or matter, God or the creature, or which must apply to the absolute being as such. He recognised this element of necessity as giving an absolute validity to such truth. Such a necessity in morals and religion would

be inconsistent with their very nature. The moral and religious have however a distinctive character of their own which may be regarded as taking the place of necessity. The right is not that which must be, but which ought to be ; religion expresses the relation of the creature to God, not which must be, but which it is the highest good to be. Surely it cannot be claimed that either of these is irrational or lacks supreme validity as truth.

But granting the validity of these as truth, we arrive at once at the theistic philosophy. Deism is not philosophy, but only an importation into the sphere of philosophy of conceptions derived from the sphere of physical science and valid only there. Its mistake is, or rather was, akin to materialism.

Morals and religion then we may freely accept as not inconsistent with the highest reason ; and this is acknowledged by the prevailing philosophy of our day by so extending the province of the reason as to make it cover, at least in part, these fields. We think this a mistake, and would prefer the old Kantian to the neo-Kantian method. The latter may easily degenerate into rationalism, *i.e.* the attempt to found religion upon reason. But the neo-Kantian has this advantage that it avoids any seeming disparagement of the validity of moral and religious truth.

When, therefore, the Christian religion stands before us as asserting that God can be known, that He is one, that He is spiritual, that He is

immanent in His creation, but that He is personally distinct from it, it seems to be in harmony with the highest rational truth, even when in the distinctness of its affirmation of the latter point it transcends the dimmer light of reason.

In this respect again it surpasses all other historic forms of religion, and thus may with confidence be accepted as the best religion that the human race has attained to.



## CHAPTER III

### CHRISTIANITY A DIVINE REVELATION

THE claim to be the best religion in the world is still far short of the full claim of Christianity. From the beginning it has asserted itself as the one religion, all else being either preparatory to or alien from it. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Even the ancient religion given to the chosen people is here excluded, now that Christ has come. This higher claim is asserted on the ground that Christianity is the culmination of a supernatural order introduced into the world by God for the salvation of the race from sin. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hence "how shall we

escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord was confirmed unto us by them that heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will." We have here distinctly set forth a Divine order of revelation in harmony with that of creation and providence, since it is given by the same Mediator, but distinct from these, and attested by works of power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. This revelation is centred in God's Son, and is completed through the apostolic ministry. This revelation is supernatural in its character, and its end is the salvation of men from sin. This Divine character, supernatural character, and special object of the Christian revelation is set forth, not so much in the form of a claim or pretension as of a fact already clearly established to the religious faith of the second generation of the Christian Church, to whom these words were written.

This higher faith was not merely an intellectual opinion, it was in the fullest sense a religious faith, and its demonstration was to the religious nature rather than to reason. This demonstration lies in the facts of the case. By its facts and principles, Christianity approves itself to the hearts and consciences of men as not only the best religion the world has seen, but as an order arranged of God, a supernatural gift and power, and a salvation from sin. Before proceeding to consider the facts upon which this higher Christian faith is founded,

it will be necessary to define the term supernatural, especially in its relation to religion. To do this clearly we may ask :

1. What is the natural, and what is its relation to religion ?
2. What is the supernatural, and what is its relation to religion ?
3. Is the supernatural reasonable, and on what grounds ?

*The Natural.*

By the natural we understand that which takes place under the laws or order of things at present existing in the world. This is an objective definition ; a subjective definition would substitute " known " for " existing." But the error of such substitution will appear from the fact that if an event took place under an unknown but existing law, and was hence considered supernatural, immediately on the discovery of the law, we should correct our opinion and say that the event was natural. The natural, then, in any realm of nature is the entire existing order and all that by its laws or forces springs from it, or may yet do so. But it must not be forgotten that each realm has its own nature or natural order. Voluntary motion and sensation are natural in our world, but only in the realm of animal life. In a plant they would be supernatural.

The natural in religion is that religious faith which arises in the presence of the facts of nature and of history as they transpire according to the

existing order of the world and of human affairs. That religion is as natural as intelligence, or morality is evident from its universality.

*The Supernatural.*

The supernatural is thus the introduction into the world or into any realm of nature of a power, or law or order of working not hitherto operative therein. It has been usual to rest the definition of the supernatural here, and so to make the supernatural include miracles and all deviations from or intrusions into the order of nature, however transitory they may prove to be. This breadth of meaning we think by no means conducive to accuracy of conception in this matter. We shall see presently that there is a very wide difference between the Christ, including the incarnation and the resurrection by which He enters upon His new relations to humanity and to the moral universe, and the mighty works which He wrought during His earthly life. The same may be said of the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit by which a new order of religious power was introduced into the world, and the miraculous gifts which accompanied that supreme and permanent endowment of the Church. Historically these have been transitory, or at most occasional; the other is a new order, in scriptural language, "a new heaven and a new earth." It is by no means certain that in every case the miracles were supernatural; they may have been as natural to Christ as the lifting of a stone is natural to a

man, while supernatural to the stone itself. But the whole question of the nature and office of miracle in the process of Divine revelation will appear later. At present, for the sake of clear thought, we ask our readers to consent to define the supernatural as the introduction into the world or into any realm of nature of a new power or order of working not before therein existing, such order or power becoming thereby an abiding new nature, an added higher nature, which is quite in accord with the etymology of the word supernatural.

It will be seen that the supernatural does not imply anything contrary to nature, nor does it imply the abrogation or suspension of previous law or order. In fact, if nature and the supernatural are from the same hand and mind, then we should expect them to be in accord and not contradictory. The linking of the one to the other should be in harmony with the "nature" of both.

Before proceeding to consider the relation of the supernatural to religion, let us first consider our third question—

*Is the Supernatural Reasonable?*

This question cannot be answered *a priori*. The supernatural is not the universal and necessary. Unless we are materialists or pantheists, both the natural and the supernatural fall within the domain of science and not of philosophy. They are to be studied by observation of facts, not by



deduction from any first principles. If, therefore, the supernatural is reasonable, it is so in the light of known facts ; it is in harmony with the analogy of nature. The Baconian method swept away the construction of subjective sciences of nature ; it must do the same for the supernatural.

Have we then in the past history of our world any traces of the supernatural ? *i.e.* have there at any time appeared new forms of force, or new orders of working ? If so, what has been the relation of these new forces to the pre-existing order ?

1. The history of our world as unfolded in the geological record clearly proves that at various times new forces have made their appearance in the world. Every attempt of science to evolve life from inorganic matter has failed, and all science goes to establish the fact that the introduction of life was a new force and order of things, a new nature, and hence, at the beginning, supernatural to the existing world. The same may be said of thought or intellectual life. The clumsy attempts to account for moral life and all the higher forms of spiritual activity of which we are conscious are so clearly the creatures of imagination that as yet they are utterly without scientific basis. Doubtless all these as introduced were in harmony with nature, but not out of nature. They were above nature, a new and higher birth.

2. These new forces have not superseded or suspended or destroyed the existing or preceding

natural order in each case. They have rather been engrafted on and added to it.

3. The new forces have themselves become a permanent and higher order, a new nature, in the world, and that not in the accidents of their first occurrence, but in their essential elements.

4. The whole doctrine of evolution from the standpoint of theistic philosophy is linked in with these facts. If the first principle of all philosophy is correct, that cause and effect are equal and inseparable, then all true evolution is evolution, not of material forces, but of a Divine plan in which the whole Universe moves to its higher perfection of nature by a continually added energy from the personal will of the immanent God.

With these observations of science, and with this philosophy, the supernatural as the coming into the world of a new and higher order is in perfect harmony, and it cannot be rejected as in any way contradictory to reason. It must be accepted or rejected solely in the light of the evidence offered.

### *Supernatural Religion.*

We have already seen that religion implies two factors in the order of nature: (1) a power or capacity in man to know God, and (2) revealing facts which call that power into activity. Both these are implied in Paul's statement of the facts of the case (Rom. i. 19-21). In each of these factors the supernatural may appear. The super-

natural may be a higher capacity for the knowledge of God, a subjective supernatural, revealing God more fully even in the old facts both of creation and providence. It may also appear in a new order of facts, and especially in new moral and religious forces working in human life and history, by which God is more clearly and perfectly revealed, in elements of His character and relations to us which before were but dimly, if at all, apprehended. For the apprehension of these new facts the new power may be absolutely essential. The old eyes might be blind to the new light.

*The Evidence of the Divine and Supernatural Order in Christianity.*

This evidence lies in facts either recorded in credible history or manifestly existent to-day. If there has been in the history of the race a Divine plan unfolding, to use Paul's word, or evolving, in modern phrase, a higher perfection of the moral and religious life of humanity, and if that plan has involved the introduction of new moral and religious forces founded upon supernatural revealing facts, and if it has further involved the granting to man of greatly increased moral and religious insight, then we should be able clearly to trace such process of evolution in the world's religious history. And if Christianity is the supreme culmination of this process, and all other religions are but the wrecks of decay which have fallen out by the way, and are only

remembered as fossils of a far past age, or as strange survivors of a life gone by, then Christianity stands not only as the best but as the only religion. Whatever was true or good or useful in all others survives here, and is embraced in this. But there is one step more which goes beyond this analogy of nature. If our world is a world of moral and spiritual ruins, then the old religions may be but part of the old ruins, and the new alone represent the true spiritual life of to-day.

What then are the facts which present conclusive evidence of the presence of a Divine and supernatural order in Christianity?

1. Christianity alone furnishes an orderly and progressive line of moral and religious development, beginning with the primitive and prehistoric foundations of nature religion, and moving onward and upward in well-marked successive steps to its present position of the most perfect of all religions. Arising out of the primitive nature religion, we find the simple yet deeply devout faith of the patriarchal age, with its simple forms of worship. Next comes the long line of moral development, founded on the Mosaic institutions, and completed in the work of the prophets. Planted back in this is the religious faith of the Messianic hope, forming the religious side of the work of the prophetic order, and culminating in such remarkable prophetic insight and foresight of faith as is manifest in the latter Isaiah. Finally comes a revival of spiritual life under John the Baptist, into which

Christ comes as the culmination, for whom all else was but a foreordered preparation. It will be seen that this line is not a mere reformation or series of reformations. It is positively progressive, a movement onward and upward. This of itself would point it out as the true order of God, whether natural or supernatural. If there be a God ordering the world and its movement, then, however we may find in degeneration and death the work of the imperfection or sin of the creature, we must recognise His hand in the great movement by which the creation or any one realm of creation moves upward to the goal of perfection. This is as much a religious faith as a rational conclusion.

2. This orderly progress proceeds at every stage through a conscious communion of the human spirit with God. From the beginning of its recorded history there is evidence, not only of the general feeling after God and recognition of Him in nature, but also of an inner consciousness of God speaking within the human soul. This, as we shall see more fully hereafter, is the essential and common element in the whole course of revelation. It is no sporadic phenomenon of material or sensuous theophany, nor of trance vision or dream with religious interpretation, or clairvoyant or hypnotic frenzy, but a clear, strong, moral and religious conviction of God's mind and will. In most cases no mention is made of the means by which this conviction was awakened. In some cases the more



sensuous and physical means are mentioned. These were the staple of the so-called revelations of other religions. They are perhaps the exception in the line which leads to Christ, and mark, we think, its lower forms. It is quite certain that in all ages true moral and religious impressions or convictions have come to man through dreams or through abnormal physical states, and probably such is still the case. But it is also certain that in such cases a superstitious emphasis is often placed upon the medium, while a true and pure faith will recognise that the truth is the all-important matter, however communicated. Such truth clearly forms the substance of the entire preparatory line of religious life, which, as we have seen, leads up to Christianity. Such were the convictions of duty and Divine direction of life and Divine promise which came to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the moral light given to Moses, which was also accompanied by a conviction of a Divine mission and of promises to His faith, and the Divine call and messages to Samuel and the entire line of prophets. In every case, whatever may have been the particular psychological method by which truth was unfolded, there was a clear apprehension of moral and religious truth. But more, this truth was accompanied by a conviction of the presence and authority of God. Already the presence of God in nature was recognised. The voice of conscience was also recognised as the spirit of the same God, teaching man wisdom and understanding. And

now in these special calls, these unfoldings of new truth, these messages and burdens, there was the clearest conviction of the presence of the same spirit. The men in whose experience these phenomena appear were such men as Abraham, of whom a Divine call and light is recorded ; Moses, Samuel, the long line of prophets ; a line of men of contemplation and spiritual insight, writers of hymns and proverbs ; and, finally, priestly recorders and interpreters of the current history of the time.

3. This line of men with special call and gifts of spiritual insight was accompanied by a course of history most intimately identified with their work. Without claiming for this history a miraculous character, or placing it beyond the action of natural law, it was perhaps, as no other history, dominated by the religious spirit, and served in a remarkable degree for the unfolding of religious ideas and truth.

4. The outcome of these concurrent lines was (*a*), a body of moral and religious truth such as appeared nowhere else in the world ; this we have already seen ; and (*b*), that peculiar body of promise and prediction which is known as Messianic prophecy. At whatever point we date the beginning of this peculiar phenomena, it stands unique in the world's religious history. It runs continuously through centuries. It constantly takes its form from the peculiarities of contemporary history, and so varies both in its manner of conception and of presentation.

But it moves with unfaltering certainty to a broader outlook and to a more distinct vision of good things to come, and becomes itself a great religious faith, taking possession of a whole nation, and inspiring its best men with the loftiest religious hopes.

4. This line of progressive development finds its culmination in Jesus Christ. He fulfils both the law and the prophets. The line of religious faith is fulfilled or completed by the most perfect conception of the attributes and nature of God, and of His relation to humanity that the world has yet known ; a conception which fills and satisfies the religious faith of humanity. Its moral teaching was completed, fulfilled, by the unfolding in Christ and His teaching of the most perfect moral ideal, an ideal after which the conscience and life of humanity is still feebly striving. If the present evolutionary view of ethics, as a constant struggle towards the moral ideal which continually moves upward, be the true view, its advocates are surely bound to see that the whole Christian world for nearly nineteen centuries has found that ideal in Jesus of Nazareth, and has not yet been able to reach it in practical life, or surpass it in ideal conception. And finally this same Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the strange Messianic hope of Israel, not in its lower and material form, as the literalists of that day expected, and as some of them to-day would still seek to prove, but in its true spiritual significance, as a king-

dom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

5. This Christ Himself appears as the most Divine of all revelations of God, as the faith of the apostolic age expresses it, "The word of God made flesh." This is certainly not only Divine but supernatural, and if this can be established to the world's religious faith, then it not only stamps Christianity as supernatural in the highest sense, but it explains, as partaking of the same Divine and supernatural character, all the various steps which preceded and prepared the way for Him. It is scarcely necessary to prove as a matter of fact from the New Testament that the whole apostolic preaching centred around three propositions:

(1) The Incarnation; God's Son manifest in the flesh.

(2) The Atonement; forgiveness of sins offered to men in His name.

(3) The Mediatorial Kingdom; this Christ risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father as the head of the Church.

This is all succinctly presented in 1 Tim. iii. 16, in the fifteenth of first Corinthians, and in the first of Romans. This was most clearly the faith of the Apostolic Church, and if this faith was true, in its very nature it stamps Christianity as Divine and supernatural, inasmuch as it is based on a supernatural foundation of fact. We shall see later that it is accompanied by supernatural capacity, and that these two, the facts and the

capacity, introduce a new and higher order of religious life. The faith of the early Church in Christ as Divine is indisputable. The very existence of the Ebionites or Judaizing Christians proves this. How was Jesus demonstrated to that faith as the Son of God? I am not now speaking of any technical definition of Christ's Sonship. Doubtless this had not yet been made. But without such technical definition; Christ under this title was the object of worship, faith and religious affection, such as belongs to God alone. How came He to command this?

The records show clearly that this faith arose—

1. Out of the historic facts of His life, especially the resurrection.

2. From the impression of His personality and character.

3. Through the inward demonstration by the Holy Spirit of His relation to our salvation. The faith in Christ as the Son of God is thus not based on reason or logical demonstration, though it may be quite reasonable. It is properly a religious faith, and not a philosophical speculation, or scientific theory.

1. At the basis of this faith lay certain historic facts. The most prominent of these was the resurrection. So important was this that Paul on this ground alone stakes the very existence of the Christian faith, 1 Cor. xv. 13-19. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." But while the resurrection was with Paul central, it did not



stand alone. Strange as it may appear His death was as necessary to this faith as the resurrection, and on these two historic facts throughout the Epistles, the faith in Christ as the Son of God is founded. "He died and rose again." But we would make a great mistake if we concluded from the silence of the Epistles that the faith of the early Church embraced nothing beyond these two main facts. In the brief outlines of apostolic preaching given in the Acts we have everywhere reference to a life filled in with mighty works. The first sermon sets Him forth as "a man approved of God among you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts ii. 22). This first note is continued throughout the book. The resurrection is central even in this first sermon, but the mighty works support it by their common accord. When we come to examine the place of miracles in the process of Divine revelation we shall see how well-fitted they were to perform this subordinate part, to prepare the way as it were for the resurrection and how the resurrection itself must be the supreme demonstration, not as a mere miracle, but as like the death of Christ, an essential part of His work. The presence of a man among them for three years, going about performing continually these works of Divine power and mercy, then dying a cruel death through the envy of sinners, and on the third day coming forth again and ap-

pearing in their midst was surely foundation for the religious faith expressed in the exclamation of Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

The gospel of St John was written for the purpose of proving to the faith of the Church that Jesus was the Son of God, John xx. 31. It collects, combines, and enlarges on all in the life and words of Christ which specially pointed to this conclusion, or rather led to this conviction. It is a summary of the faith of the early Church apprehending Christ in His Divine character. On the other hand, the synoptic gospels give us a summary of the memories of the apostles and eye-witnesses, as they related and hand down the words and works of Christ and the facts of His life during the age of the first apostolic preaching and teaching. In St John we see the faith established, the edifice fully built, in the synoptics, the stones out of which it was building. In the Acts and Epistles, we get glimpses of the process of structure.

Turning first to the synoptics, how is Christ there presented to the religious faith of the penitent sinner? We say religious faith, for the Divine Christ is first revealed to religious faith; in St John that religious faith is already passing into intellectual definition, though without yet losing its religious character and power.

(1) We have rehearsed by each of these the supernatural facts already referred to, viz., His mighty works, the Divine power and truth of His doctrine, and, after His death, His resurrec-

tion from the dead. Two add to this supernatural events attending His birth and early life.

(2) These facts are attested historically, not only by the four gospel writings, and incidentally by the Acts and the Epistles, but they are clearly recognised as the foundation facts of the new faith by profane writers, and by enemies of the faith. True or false they formed the foundation of the faith which at that date came into existence. This foundation of fact was proclaimed openly in Jerusalem and all parts of Palestine, immediately after their occurrence, if the record is correct, two months after the resurrection. The preaching of these facts extended through the most enlightened portions of the Roman Empire within the lifetime of even the older eye-witnesses; and even in the face of the severest persecution and most strenuous opposition, it founded a strong and profound religious faith. Under such circumstances the very existence of the religion proves the reality of the historic facts. You cannot account for it apart from them.

2. But at least with the first believers, and, through their testimony, with all subsequent hearers, the personality of Christ entered into and formed the foundation of their faith in His Divinity quite as much as the separate facts of His life. He stood out in a world of sinners and in a degenerate age and country, not only as a good man with some share of human infirmity, but conspicuous, as we have seen, by a Divine

spotless freedom from sin. He separated Himself from all personal ambitions, passions, cares, selfish interests and entanglements, such as usually occupy men and fill up their lives, that He might do the work which His Father gave Him. He entered upon that work under the impulse of a spiritual power, which, while shared in a minor measure by thousands who came to John's baptism, marked Him out at once as pre-eminent, and to John's own consciousness as immeasurably his own superior. "He shall baptise you with Holy Spirit and with fire." His ministry at once evinced this Divine power. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." "Never man so spake." "All men wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Peter makes his confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and again, "Lord, to whom shall we go, for Thou alone hast the words of eternal life." Nor was this all, for in His presence, even while He seemed to refuse her, the Syro-phenician woman is inspired with the faith which cries out, "Yea, Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." Even to-day an open-hearted man cannot read the simple record of these fragmentary memories without feeling the power of this remarkable moral and spiritual personality.

3. But in the presence of these facts and under the influence of this personality the full faith was called forth only by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost placed the Christ in a new

relation to the conscious thoughts of the disciples. From that day His true Divinity began to manifest itself to their faith. They saw Him now as they had not seen Him before as the risen and ascended Saviour, exalted at the right hand of the Father, "granting repentance to Israel." Their religious faith which from childhood had fed on the Messianic promises of the prophets now at once linked Jesus to these promises, and found in Him, not the material and political fulfilment which they had looked for under the teaching of the scribes, but a new and spiritual fulfilment. And this brings us to the last phase of the supernatural and Divine character of Christianity.

*The Supernatural Religious Capacity which it  
brought to the Race.*

This is known as the gift of the Holy Spirit, and with its first appearance on the day of Pentecost, Christianity was first fully introduced as a living religious faith into the world. What was this gift of the Holy Spirit? It consisted essentially of deep convictions of sin, followed by a view of God in Christ as forgiving sin, and an inward love, joy, peace, in fact a sense of completely changed moral and religious relation to God. This was a new thing in the world's moral and religious history. Occasional and partial anticipations of it had been seen in the past history of the Hebrew people, but never before after the manner and to the extent now experienced. This new moral and religious power



according to the record reached three thousand people on the first day, and there cannot be question that in a single generation it reached myriads of people in all the eastern parts of the empire, and it is a fact patent on the very face of history that in three hundred years it had conquered the Roman Empire, not by the power of arms, but by the influence of religious ideas. We have already seen that it produced a perfection and a type of moral and religious character unknown in the world before, and not yet surpassed.

2. We find this moral power not universally, but still quite frequently, accompanied by some extraordinary intellectual phenomena known as the gifts of tongues, and less frequently by pre-science of future events. The precise nature of these events it may be difficult now to determine but that there did take place things out of the common order of nature, and that these emphasized the moral and religious power cannot be doubted.

3. We find further a frequent reference to remarkable power of healing, and other extraordinary manifestations in the region of physical life accompanying the moral and religious influence spoken of as the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is to be noted that the entire series of events thus set before us are not detached or isolated facts, each depending on the individual testimony by which they are affirmed. They are parts of a great united movement, of the date and character of which there cannot be the slightest question,

and the effects of which endure in all kinds of historic monuments to this day. Its central element has become a permanent fact in the world, although at the beginning it was quite as extraordinary as its transitory and occasional intellectual and physical accompaniments. It is a mistake to regard the illuminating and converting power as natural, and the tongues and miracles alone as supernatural. Both doubtless have relation to natural law, but both transcend it. But the miraculous accompaniments were but occasional at furthest, an extension at times of the miraculous power into the realm of our physical nature. In a short time they apparently ceased. The true central supernatural was the spiritual influence known as the gift of the Holy Ghost. The strange accompanying phenomena but emphasized its supernatural character, *i.e.* made all men feel more sensibly the special presence of God, but that presence was essentially the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. Its universal supernatural result was not the healing of disease, or the raising of the dead, or the gift of tongues, but the new spiritual life, which they recognised as a new creation, a spiritual resurrection, a new life from the dead.

Turning our attention then to this central spiritual power, we note :

1. That it was a deep moral and religious influence, creating not only strong emotions, but also permanent convictions of truth.

2. That this influence was increased by the ac-

companiments. They extended it to men whose natures were so spiritually dull and dead that they had no receptive power for truth. I Cor. xiv. 21, 22.

3. It is never trifling or immoral.

4. It is never irrational.

5. It convinced men not so much by a process of logic as by awakening of and appeal to the moral and religious intuitions. Hence resistance to it was sin and unbelief.

6. This moral and religious influence has become a new order. It is continuous to this day.

This last point is attested by the whole history of the Church. It is true that the Church has repeatedly fallen back to a lower plane, and has lived on the spiritual level of the Old Testament rather than of the Apostolic Age ; but again and again the revival of the Divine apostolic life has appeared, and the history of the last one hundred and fifty years has proved by the evidence of facts, which may be known and read of all men, that this Divine power is now the law and order of grace, and constitutes the very essence of the Christian religion. The supernatural gift of the Holy Ghost is not a mere superadded attestation, but it is the presence and power of God Himself in His moral world, creating a new and higher moral and religious order. It is this which gives to Christianity its supernatural character and its true pre-eminence above all the old religions founded in nature ; nay, more, which makes it now the only way and truth and life.

*This Supernatural Religion the World's Salvation  
from Sin.*

We have already seen that the introduction from time to time of new moral and religious forces into the world is in harmony with the history of physical life, and hence not unreasonable. It may be completely justified on the principle of evolution as a law of universal progress. Nature is not a fixed and eternal perfection, but an onward movement from the imperfect toward the perfect, and perhaps we might say from the finite toward the infinite. This of itself proves nature to be not the perfect and infinite and self-sustained, but the imperfect and the finite and the derived. Under the law of causation, if it has an onward movement towards higher perfection, it must be not from itself, but from the original source of its being. Each new impulse towards a higher perfection of being is thus supernatural. All higher life is born from above. The inorganic becomes the organic by being lifted into a higher life from above. So the vegetable is transformed to animal from above by the assimilating power of the higher life. Thus no student of nature can pronounce successive epochs of higher revelation of God unreasonable. Christ Himself comes in the line of a universal order.

But there is another reason for the supernatural in moral and religious life. Sin has ruined the old order. This again does not stand as a fact without analogy. Degeneration is a common

fact in the history of all physical life, and sin is a moral and religious degeneration. But in the physical life the degeneration of the old life is remedied by the incoming of the new. And in the moral and religious life the ruin of sin is repaired by a new life from above. Outside of Christianity we know of but one system that has been framed for this end, and that went not to the root but to the branches, it was a remedy for misery and sorrow rather than for sin.

That the salvation of the world from sin is the purpose of Christianity is surely beyond peradventure. Its founder Himself declares, He "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," and He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." The first preachers of Christianity declare that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life"; and, again, that "He sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." How far it succeeds in this great work may be judged from what we have already learned of the moral results of Christianity. It has but, as it were, commenced its mission. It has scarcely touched more than one-third of this world of sin. It has perfectly reached the moral depths of no nation or body of people. The ruin which it seeks to remedy reaches to the deepest foundations of human life, and it is cemented and consolidated by the lapse of untold ages. But out of that



ruin already countless myriads have been redeemed, and new institutions have been created, which are at least vestibules to the city of God. Thus Christianity has already vindicated its fitness for its mission, and to that mission it is addressing itself to-day with an energy of zeal and faith, and with a spiritual power unknown in all the past.

This mission then of the world's salvation from sin, a mission attempted by no other agency to-day, at once justifies and proves the Divine and supernatural character of Christianity.

*Summary.*

We are now prepared to bring the different elements of this investigation to its final conclusion.

Christ is the founder and centre of Christianity. He stands forth distinctly as sent by God, and has been demonstrated to the religious faith of His own age and of succeeding ages as the Son of God. Leading up to Him, and consciously or unconsciously preparing for Him, we have an order of revelation of God running back through the whole reach of human history, and giving us the highest moral and religious development of ancient civilisation. Parallel to this the ancient world's highest intellectual and political developments are almost equally conspicuous in preparing the way for His work.

Setting forth from Him, and founded on Him as the object of its faith, we have a movement of

supernatural moral and religious power forming a new order which reaches to our day.

The professed object, the manifest tendency, and the incipient success of this work are all one, viz., the salvation of the world from the obvious ruin of sin. When therefore religious faith has apprehended this movement as Divine, and its founder as the Son of God, may we not challenge moral sense, the sense of all fitness and reason itself, in support of this religious faith?

It does not profess to be a truth discovered by reason, or founded on the arguments of reason or science, but upon religious faith. But we ask again, is not this religious faith reasonable? Is it not a supremely moral faith? Is it not a beautiful faith? If so, can it be other than true? And in its deepest certainty this faith affirms that God hath sent His Son, and that in Him we have eternal life.

But when we see in this faith the natural and the supernatural blending, the human and the Divine working together, when we see it as a unity of truth, a unity of spirit, and of spiritual power, a progressive life in humanity, a true development, leading up to an inexhaustible fulness of truth, and infinite resources of moral power such as appear in all the works of God, we surely cannot doubt that it is of God, His supreme revelation of Himself to man, not simply the highest and best of natural religions, but, while in the line of nature, far transcending nature, a new creation for the world's redemption from sin.

## PART II

### THE NATURE AND PROCESS OF REVELATION AND THE FORMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

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#### CHAPTER I

##### PRELIMINARY

OUR investigation thus far assures us of the religious authority of Christianity, and of its supernatural character as given of God as the foundation of the world's religious faith. But before proceeding to investigate the contents of that faith as religious truth, *i.e.* to the study of Christian doctrine, we must know definitely the sources from which that doctrine is to be learned. This is especially necessary where, as in the case of the Christian religion, there are varieties of opinion among its followers. We have already seen that when the question was, What is religious truth? the answer was that religious truth must be demonstrated to man's spiritual nature. But when now the question is, What is true Christian teaching? there must be some authority or standard by which professed forms of Christian

teaching, wherever they vary, may be judged. As Christianity is one of the religions possessing sacred books, it might be supposed that we could at once assume that these books constituted the only authoritative standard of Christian teaching. But an examination of Christian opinion on this point shows that both ecclesiastical authority and the individual Christian consciousness have been called in as co-ordinate with these sacred books. A subordinate question is the determination of the sacred books themselves, as to whether or not they include certain books known as Apocryphal. These facts make it necessary at the very outset of the study of Christian Theology to examine the nature and process of this Divine Revelation more fully, and especially the formation of its sacred books, that we may in the light of the historic facts determine their place in the investigation of Christian Doctrine. This examination we may make under three heads :—

1. The nature and process of Revelation.
2. Inspiration and the creation of the written Word.
3. The Canon.
4. We may then consider the Authority of Scripture.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE AND PROCESS OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION

AS we have already seen, in its very meaning the term revelation has its subjective and its objective side. It implies a human capacity to receive a revelation, and a Divine activity by which revelation is made. It therefore includes the entire historical process by which God imparts and man receives true ideas of God, His will, and His works. The first part of our investigation is therefore essentially historical. It will assume, as the very existence of religion in the world implies, that in the constitution of the universe and the nature of man a revelation of God is not only possible, but has been made ; and it takes as already proven that Christianity represents that revelation, *i.e.* is its supreme result. It is with this result and with the entire process by which it has been reached that we have now to deal. As both the process and the result are matters of history or fact, the method here is essentially inductive. We have no right to construct an *a priori* theory. The simple questions are, How has God revealed Himself to men ? What is the form or nature of this revelation ? and where is it to be found ?



In answering these questions we must include in revelation the sum total of knowledge of God and of His will which has come into the actual possession of the race as a whole, or of any part or even individual of the race. The revelation to be truly such must have been completed in actual knowledge. There may be now in existence potential elements of knowledge, Divine works intended to reveal God's will, but which no man has yet been able to read. But until they are read, through the gift to man of a more perfect religious illumination or capacity for the knowledge of God, they are not yet a completed revelation; they are like the life and work of Christ before Pentecost. The revelation as it now exists is the sum total of the knowledge of God received by man.

The study of the complete content of this revelation does not concern us here. We have only two passing observations to offer, both of which are, we think, fair historical inductions.

The first is that no part of this revelation once in possession of the race has ever been lost. We do not affirm this of the specific apprehension of individual statements of truth. Abraham, for example, may have received particular promises or commands, similar to those recorded, of which tradition has preserved no remembrance. There may have been and certainly were numbers of particular prophetic discourses, warnings and threatenings of which we have no record. So St John says at the close of his Gospel, "There

are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written, every one, I suppose, that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." But when we say that Divine revelation once received has never been lost, we refer, not to specific communications, but to what we may call principles of truth. No true idea of God has been lost, no principle of moral obligation has passed out of sight. No ground of faith or light upon human life once given to men has utterly perished. We make this assertion as a general induction from the entire field of modern research and recovery of ancient history. Entirely forgotten languages have been recovered ; knowledge of entirely forgotten religions has been recovered ; forgotten chapters in history, and bodies of ancient law, and institutions of ancient civilisation have been recovered, but no word or doctrine which represents a lost idea of God which could to-day command religious faith. It is therefore as a matter of fair historic induction that we assert that no truth of God has ever been lost.

Our second inductive observation is that the Christian Scriptures as they now exist contain the sum total of this revelation of God. Here again we refer not to the specific forms, but to the truth, the ideas of God and of duty which they conveyed, in so far as these forms were adequate to convey or express the truth. This proposition also we think a fair induction

from our modern historical and comparative science of religion. We have found nothing of truth in the religions of the past which Christianity has omitted; nothing to which it has not given a more perfect and fitting expression.

If these two statements are correct then our task of understanding as well the content as the nature and method of Divine revelation is greatly simplified. We are not driven to examine the whole world's literature or even the whole wide field of sacred books. In two records, the Old Testament and the New, we have before us the materials for the study of the full content of Divine revelation and for the understanding of its nature and general method.

But while we may safely assume that these two volumes give us the accumulated result of the entire process of revelation, they by no means present us with the entire historical process. These writings themselves recognise pre-existing religious truth already in possession of men when they began to be written. Men had already a religious vocabulary, and hence ideas of God and His will, before either the Pentateuch or the documents which it incorporated were written. When the author of Gen. i. wrote "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," men had already a name for God, a conception of creative power and wisdom, and a comprehensive expression for the sum total of the created universe. When Moses spake, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one

Lord," the unity of God was not first discovered, but only maintained against polytheistic tendencies.

The sacred Scriptures of the Hebrews and of the Christians are thus neither the whole nor the beginning of the process of Divine revelation, but only the culmination of a process which doubtless began with the beginning of the race, which certainly goes back beyond the beginning of historic record, but which has found its goal in Jesus Christ. We have already claimed that they sum up all the truth as to God which has ever been in possession of the race, that no fragment of what has once been revealed has ever been lost ; but while our modern historical and archæological studies in the science of religion seem clearly to establish this fact, they also reveal to us, that many important elements, in fact the most universal elements of this truth, were in possession of the race in various primitive forms prior to the existence of even the earlier portions of our Scriptures.

The Scriptures themselves thus reveal and even in more direct statements recognise a primitive, fundamental, and universal revelation of God to man before Moses or Abraham. In fact they themselves carry back revelation as the foundation of moral and religious order and ideas, both before and after the origin of sin, to the very beginning of the race. The two creation documents placed in the forefront of Genesis include the foundations not only of

physical nature, but also of moral, religious, social and industrial life.

In examining the method of revelation this primitive revelation must be taken into account, stretching far back into the prehistoric life of humanity.

It has been customary to separate this primitive and universal revelation of God to man from that specifically recorded in our Scriptures, and to call the first natural religion and its method the light of nature, while the latter is considered supernatural, both as to content and method of revelation. We think that this distinction is not warranted by Scripture itself, which knows no distinction between that revelation in which "the heavens declare the glory of God," and that in which the word of the Lord came to the prophets. Both revelations are recognised alike as Divine truth, and are received by the same faculty of moral and religious understanding. They appeal to faith by the power of truth and with the authority of truth, which is the authority of God, and are enforced by inward conviction and not by outward compulsion. The entire conception of the enforcement upon the world, *ab extra*, of religious ideas by the employment of either manifest or occult supernatural agencies, and the theory which regards such ideas as something essentially different from those which appeal only to our convictions of faith, conscience, and reason, and so constituting in a special sense the supernatural revelation, are alike foreign to the



teaching of the prophets of the Old Testament, and still more to that of Christ and His apostles in the New. We shall see presently the function of the supernatural in the process of revelation, but it is not such as to divide the contents of revelation into natural and supernatural truth. All truth is one, is Divine, is of God. A distinction which will bring us more directly to the heart of our subject, lies between the process by which truth comes to each individual mind, and that by which it comes to the world at large. The two processes are intimately related, because all knowledge which is to-day the common possession or heritage of the whole world, was first revealed to some one man. While it would be a great mistake to make either our own experience of knowing God, or that of any one man who has ever lived the full measure either of the method or content of Divine revelation, it is evident that in every human experience we must find at least the first principles, the A B C of both.

Let us begin then with any truly Christian man, one who knows God by the inward light of truth and of the spirit, and ask what does he know of God? and how has he come by this knowledge?

The man whom we thus question may know much less of God than some men have known; he certainly will know less than all other men taken together. But that which he does know will be living religious knowledge, knowledge which has passed into his entire spiritual life,

and as such it is completed revelation. It is truth which has come from God and has found man. It is not a mere means of knowing God, such as a spoken or written word might be, or such as God's works of creation or providence, or even of miracle may be; but it is actual living knowledge of God, and so represents the completed course of revelation from God to man.

Again, since this knowledge has come from God and has reached man, the way by which it has come must represent or include all the essential elements of revelation, the steps without which a revelation cannot be made. It may also include accidental peculiarities, matters which may vary in other cases; but that which has not in some way, and at some point of the process, entered into this revelation, cannot be considered essential, and the essentials are certainly the most important part of any process.

Asking then such a man what he knows of God, he will tell you that he knows that God exists, that He is a holy God, and yet that He is a God of loving-kindness and truth, keeping promises of grace and mercy even for sinful men, and that for Christ's sake He forgives sins; that He calls us to be holy, and that at the last He will judge us according to our works. The moral and religious truth thus expressed is not a theory or a mere collection of speculative opinions, but the truth as apprehended by a firm religious faith. If you ask him how he knows this he will tell you

that he knows it by inward conviction, by that sense of certainty by which the soul apprehends truth, and which, in regard to this truth, we call the full assurance of faith. The only account he can possibly give of this matter from within is that these truths appeal to him with convincing power. As Paul says, "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only" (*λογος*, argumentative discourse), "but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." This inward light and force of truth, which, as we shall see presently, men in all ages have learned to call the power of a Divine spirit, is thus universally necessary for a true living knowledge of God, and hence is an essential element in the process of Divine revelation.

If, however, we turn from this subjective point, and ask for the outward or objective source from which this truth comes to us with convincing power, the answer is, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Someone by preaching with voice or pen has testified of the Gospel or good news of the grace of God. A spoken or a written Word, passing from man to man, stands out in the history of the case as another important, if not universal, link in God's revelation of Himself to man.

But in Paul's day but very few had heard this spoken or written word. He therefore appeals to another external source from which the truth comes universally to man, set forth in the 19th Psalm, from which he further quotes: "But I

say did they not hear? Yea, verily, 'their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.'" This source of truth is God's work in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." God's works may immediately awaken our souls to apprehend these convictions of truth by faith; and probably there are few living Christians who have not thus heard God speaking with power to their hearts through nature or through providence.

But if we go back to the spoken or the written Word, and ask whence it comes, we find that it comes from a soul himself possessed of the living knowledge, a soul to whom God has already revealed Himself, and so we travel back to ask for those to whom the Word of God first came; by what means did they first receive the truth and knowledge of God? Here, if anywhere, we shall find special circumstances in the process of revelation, something which may distinguish the revelation as it commonly comes to individual men from the revelation as originally given for the world.

But before carrying our investigation back to the great original epochs of revelation at which new and more perfect knowledge of God has come in for the world at large, we may get some light on the essentials of the process of revelation from the facts now before us in the experience of the individual man. We have seen that such an one knows God not only

through the written or spoken Word, but also by the voices of creation and providence. "The heavens," to each of us, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." There are times when God teaches us knowledge by His chastenings, times when His wonderful dealings with us declare to us His goodness. Now it may be very difficult for us to separate these teachings from the knowledge which has come to us through the testimony of God's written or spoken Word, but the whole teaching of Scripture leads us to the fact that this was one of the ways by which the living word of Divine Knowledge was originally communicated to men.

We have thus arrived at three most important general facts in the process of revelation.

1. In all revelation there is inward apprehension and conviction of truth by living faith.

2. To the great majority of men this comes by a written or spoken Word ministered through human instrumentality.

3. But faith may be and frequently is either originally awakened or greatly strengthened by objective revealing facts. These facts, with the inward convictions, constitute a continuous, and in itself complete chain of revelation by which God makes Himself and His truth known to men. This revelation according to St Paul is sufficient as a basis of universal responsibility.

But in addition to these general facts, there are some other inductions to be gathered from God's



revelation of Himself in the general experience of men.

One of these is its progressive character and its adaptation to our capacity to receive. "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things;" and so in another chapter, in the same epistle, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." This is especially true of the form in which the truth is both presented and received. A man to whom an abstract discourse on the principles of justice would be a sealed book may respond in his inmost conscience to a concrete example or parable such as Nathan used with David.

Again the inward and spiritual nature of faith and its relation to truth as truth enforced by the power of the Divine Spirit renders this truth independent to a large extent of logical processes of argument. It is received by moral and religious intuition. It is also independent of human authority; its authority is Divine and spiritual, *i.e.* productive of inward conviction as truth, and does not rest on human learning or ecclesiastical decree. The man in whose heart true faith is wrought makes no question of the genuineness and authenticity of books, or of the right or authority of a pope, a council, a church, a ministry, or a reformation. He has heard the voice of God, he has been convicted by the Word and the Spirit of truth, and happy indeed is he if

he obeys the Divine call. If he had to wait for the solution of all questions of historical criticism and philosophy before he could believe, he would be exceedingly unfortunate; for in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he has no capacity for such questions. Our theological sciences go on creating new problems for solution, but the world's true faith goes on its way believing in God and in Christ, and finding everywhere the blessedness and assurance of faith. If the believer is an amateur in theological disputations he may very likely transfer the strong and rightful assurance of his faith to the particular theological opinions which he may have chanced to imbibe, thereby making a very poor theological critic out of a very good Christian, or on the other hand his imperfect and unfortunate attempts at the solution of purely intellectual questions may serve but to confuse his faith, and dull the keenness of his sense of spiritual truth. So Christ says, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes." We do not advocate obscurantism, we wish only that these purely intellectual problems should be clearly and for ever separated from the exercise of religious faith.

*The Original Revelations of God to Men.*

We turn now to the broader question, What has God revealed of Himself to the world at large?

and how has He revealed this knowledge? The answer to these questions will include the content of all revelation of God to individual men, and also the method, in so far as it is a method for the race, and not an accident of the individual. But it may also include special methods by which God has at special epochs enlarged the knowledge of Himself by man, for the benefit of the whole race.

We have already seen in God's revelation of Himself to the individual man the importance and office of the Word, *i.e.* of a body of truth concerning God and His will existing among men, handed down and spread abroad either by writing or by word of mouth, and becoming the instrument by which truth comes to most men for the production of a living faith. We have seen that this word springs out of a living knowledge of God, and tends to create living knowledge of God, as it passes through the ages and generations from heart to heart. We have already seen that this word reached its fulness of grace and truth in Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit which according to His promise was given on Pentecost to His disciples. But we have also seen that through prophets and wise men it reached back to the first beginnings of our race. That word is to-day revealing God, *i.e.* creating living spiritual knowledge of God in the hearts of men beyond all other agencies. It is the world's great interpreter of the voices of Creation and Providence.

It carries the faith and conscience of men up to their most perfect knowledge of faith and duty, and it speaks to that faith and conscience with the supreme authority of eternal truth.

This word has indeed been written in the Book, but it has been re-written in many books. Poets and philosophers, painters and all artists have seized upon its life-giving spirit, have felt its glow in their hearts, and have poured it forth into all new and modern forms of thought and beauty. It speaks not now in Greek and Hebrew alone, but in hundreds of living languages, and in forms of art which transcend all languages, and are read by universal humanity. While expressed in the Book in divinely inspired perfection, its streams have watered all fields of human thought and have enriched all human literature. This Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever is a spiritual thing, imperfectly grasped by all our thought, imperfectly expressed by all our languages contained but in part by all our books, a treasure in earthen vessels, even when set forth in the thought and words of an inspired apostle. The creation of this word among men is the process of the revelation of God for the world, and the Book is its divinely ordered and completed form.

In historical study there is great advantage in beginning at a point where we are already well informed, and from which we can work back to the more obscure. We shall therefore begin with the Book rather than with the more

obscure beginnings of knowledge of God and religious faith which preceded the Book.

In the Book itself, which is a growth of many centuries, the clearest light shines around Jesus Christ and the Apostolic Age. This has also the advantage of being a point of completeness, both an end and a beginning, the beginning of the great movement of Christian spiritual life the fundamental unit of which we have already described as the revelation of God to the individual man, the end of the progressive process by which our present heritage of religious truth came into possession of our race. Whatever may be the critical questions as to date and authorship of individual books of the New Testament, it is certain that the great movement out of which they sprang and the fundamental ideas which they express date from the first century of our era. The books themselves can none of them be very far removed from this point of origin. They show us clearly that, at that time, not only new forms, but also many new ideas began to take hold of the world's faith, and to spread with amazing rapidity from Jerusalem and Syria far out through the Roman Empire. To any Christian reader of the New Testament there cannot be the slightest doubt as to the nature of this movement. As it is described in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St Paul, it is the perfect counterpart of the revelation of God in individual experience which we have already described. It



consisted essentially of deep moral conviction of sin, such as is described in the seventh and preceding chapters of Romans, and of the creation of that faith in God and Christ which is truly called Christian. It was not the creation of a new philosophy or theology, nor yet of a new society or organisation, though both the latter were after results, but it was a planting in the hearts of men of new convictions of duty, of new faith in God as their Father in heaven, and of a new hope of immortality. If we enquire what was the origin of this new faith, we find it commencing from the preaching of a few men who, first at Jerusalem and then in Samaria, Damascus, Antioch, Asia Minor, and so outward, proclaimed to men with wonderful power of inward conviction repentance toward God and faith in the name of Jesus of Nazareth for the forgiveness of their sins. The conviction which accompanied this preaching was an awakening of conscience and an opening of spiritual understanding, like the vision of the ancient prophets, and both preachers and people recognised and spoke of it as the Spirit of God. Further, at the command of the same word in the name of Jesus, diseases were healed and other signs and wonders wrought which made the people still more sensibly recognise the direct presence and power of God. Now what was the significance of these events as a revelation of God?

1. It was perfect revealing of God in the noblest conceptions of His character, His will,

His works, and His relations to man, and this in the hearts and consciences of all who yielded obedience of faith.

2. It was a revelation of God in His attributes of holiness, justice and judgment to still greater numbers who refused to obey this gospel.

3. This revelation was made not as the mere saying or teaching of the preachers, but as an inward conviction of truth, the Divine power of which was still further increased by the signs and wonders which were wrought. This was the power and attestation of the Holy Ghost.

It was during the continuance of this for about the space of two generations that the entire written word contained in the New Testament was produced. The written word was not different from that spoken except in the use of the pen instead of the living voice ; it was the same word, whether Paul preached or Paul wrote.

Of these historical phenomena, we have here to note that this was the beginning of a long history in which for nearly nineteen hundred years God has been revealing Himself by the preaching of this gospel and the power of this Spirit among all nations. The continuous history has differed from the first beginning in these respects :

1. The primitive spiritual power has rarely, if ever, been equalled in subsequent times.

2. The subsequent ages have added nothing to the new ideas, the certain knowledge of God and His will which was given at the beginning.

3. The accompanying physical manifestations

have nearly, if not entirely, ceased, and did so about the third generation. Otherwise that which was then a new beginning has become a permanent order, and may be called the usual and, in that sense, the natural method of God's revealing grace.

This Apostolic Age we as Christians recognise as the supreme culmination of God's revelation of Himself to the world. It embraces, like the individual revelation previously considered, an inward revealing of truth to faith and conscience, but accompanied by a Divine spiritual force of conviction surpassing any previous experience of the race. It also resembled the inward revealing of to-day in building upon and enforcing the body of religious truth already in existence, especially that which had been gathered into the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It sometimes even went further and gathered up fragments of elementary truth which lay scattered in the thoughts and literature of the heathen world, showing that its supreme concern was with truth, wherever found and however revealed.

But it went beyond all present and subsequent experience of spiritual illumination in creating an enlarged body of truth, and a body of new truth, first spoken and then written which has ever since constituted for the world a new heritage of religious faith. This new truth was especially associated with the enlarged spiritual illumination and power, which began from Pentecost and has never since been entirely lost in the Church,

and has been so richly renewed during the last two centuries.

It is with this enlarged body of truth that we have now to deal. The supremely significant features in the process of its revelation were two :

1. It was founded in the life, death, and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. This was the supreme fact by which God was now revealed to the world. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." This fact places the race in a new relation to God, and reveals to religious faith a new and richer revelation of truth than had ever been given before.

2. The unfolding of this truth to the individual minds of the Church was gradual, and was called out in a natural way by the sequences of history, but under the impulse of a new and living spirit, which began from Pentecost and continued throughout the lifetime of the apostles to unfold the new truth revealed in Christ to its complete fulness. This fulness the Church received, not through one mind or one type of mind alone, but through the ministration of men of various gifts and types of spiritual life, each contributing some distinctive element to the perfect whole. This we may consider, more particularly when we come to study the subject of Inspiration.

Leaving out of sight for the time being the miraculous accompaniments of this Apostolic Age

and postponing for a time the more exact definition of the spiritual illumination of the apostolic writers, we may turn our attention to Jesus of Nazareth as the foundation of the Christian revelation of God. Without His life, work, and teaching neither the illumination of Pentecost nor the apostolic miracles could have advanced the world to this new and more perfect knowledge of God.

*Christ Revealing the Father.*

What place then does Jesus of Nazareth occupy in the process of Divine revelation?

1. If He were merely an instrument, a teacher or preacher like the apostles themselves, communicating to them with wonderful clearness of vision the new truth which they were to expand, and to carry with the new spiritual light and power to all the world, then the new revelation might have been possible without Him. Even with Him and His teaching, Christianity would have consisted, as some would have us believe it should consist to-day, of a deeper view of the Divine Fatherhood, and of the Sonship of humanity, of the evil and nature of sin, and of a profoundly spiritual as well as world-wide and age-long view of the Kingdom of God in humanity. But we see at once that this is to build a temple with no God within, to create a body without a living soul. If He gave the world the vision of sin as they had never seen it before, it was that He Himself might be the Saviour from sin, offering remission of sins through the sacrifice of Him-



self. If He revealed God the Father, it was that He the only begotten Son might give us rightful power to become the sons of God. If He opened the Divine Kingdom to all believers, it was with Himself as king upon the throne, creating that kingdom by the gift and power of His own spirit, and completing it as judge of all men at last. It is only when our religious faith embraces these elements that we have true Christianity. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." "This is eternal life to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." And so John finished his epistle with the declaration of his personal faith: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ."

The new faith is thus a faith in Christ as it is in God, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me"; and the new revelation is a revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In each individual experience it is not only God revealed to us, but "Christ revealed in us the hope of glory." It is scarcely a step beyond this then for the Church, if not the apostle, to write, "God manifest in the flesh," or "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made

by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." Christ the Son of God, one with the Father in worship and glory, is thus not a matter of proof text to be found here and there in the New Testament, but is of the very central essence of Christianity as a religious faith. If this be so, then Christ Himself is the supreme revelation of God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son (or God) which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him." It seems to us that no man can read the New Testament, and doubt that this is its faith and its foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ," so said Paul who was a wise master builder.

We stand thus face to face with the historic fact that in Jesus Christ there burst upon the world a new light, a new revelation, not only from God, but pre-eminently of God. What were the distinguishing characteristics of this supreme revelation of God in Christ?

1. It was a revelation, not only about God and His will, but a personal revelation of God Himself. The religious faith of men recognised not only that "a great prophet is risen up among us," but also that "God hath visited His people." The coming of Christ in our midst brought men more consciously into the presence of God. It was not the word of a messenger telling men of a God afar off, but a spiritual presence which brought us into

sensible touch with the God in whom "we live, move, and have our being." Henceforth the whole body and every individual member would feel that "God is in their midst," that Christ is "with them alway," that they themselves are the "temples of the Holy Ghost." Wherever this man went there was a sense to all but the most hardened, the spiritually blind and deaf, that God was present with them. The lowest acknowledgment of this was, "Never man spake like this man"; a more adequate, though a forced expression was, "We know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God"; the true and blessed confession of its truth was, "My Lord and my God."

2. It was a revelation of God in the forms of the most familiar human life. The holiness of God was manifest, not in the unnatural seclusion of a prophet in a cave, or of a priest in the adytum of a temple, or of a celestial emperor unapproachable to common mortal, but of a man who mingled every day with the multitude, a friend even of publicans and sinners, the companion of men in all common daily life, and yet "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." The wisdom of God was manifest, not in ambiguous oracles or mysterious philosophy, but in forms of moral and religious truth which appealed to the hearts and consciences of all men, and was expressed in the language of the common people, so that they heard Him gladly. Human learning, science and philosophy, however valuable in themselves, were set aside as unfit for His purpose, and

in the simple parable, the language of nature itself, to simple "babes," He revealed the things which are hidden too often from the wise and prudent, but which give rest to weary souls. The power of God was manifest in things with which all were perfectly familiar, not in plucking the stars from the sky, or rolling back the sun in the heavens or upheaving the foundations of the earth, but in the common wants in which each for himself feels the weight of the hand of the God of nature and providence, in hunger, sickness, and death. And the love of God was manifest in the common pities of a human heart, restoring her son to the widowed and bereaved mother, their child to the stricken parents, a brother to the weeping sisters; but above all, in a charity without show of condescension but full of true brotherly sympathy toward outcast sinners. This, perhaps, was the rarest and most Divine of all. And the infinite sacrifice itself was made in the same human form. He lays down His life by enduring the persecution of sinners. There is at once a Divine simplicity and a perfect humanity in this God-man life of Jesus Christ, which lets us into the deepest secret of how God reveals Himself to men. There is a wonderful unity, a law of ascending series, in this culmination of revelation in the human life of the God man. God begins His revelation of Himself in His works of material creation. There He first reveals the glory of His power and wisdom. He continues

it in a long course of providential government in which He shows forth His righteousness, faithfulness, and truth. And when by this gradual apocalypse He has prepared the world, taught them the A B C of moral and religious truth, then He perfects it in the God man, the Divine humanity, "perfect God and perfect man."

3. Even in this culminating stage of revelation there is a careful adaptation to human capacity. He does not give them that which they were not yet able to bear. In His last discourses He unfolds to them severer trials of their faith of which He says, "These things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was yet with you." And He says of other things, still held in reserve, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"; "Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth" . . . "for He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." The law of gradation of revelation to human capacity is a fixed principle of God's method both in nature and grace, and is clearly set forth and fully illustrated within the New Testament itself. It is not after the rough, disjointed manner of a human exoteric and esoteric doctrine, but is a gradual and natural growth into a more and more adequate and so perfect comprehension of truth.

#### *Miracle in Revelation.*

We may here pause to consider an important, but still subordinate question, viz., the place of miracle in this process of revelation.



We have called this question subordinate, because if we have properly grasped the deeper meaning of this whole period of revelation, the first and foundation-place in it belongs to Christ, the second to the Spirit, which from Him comes to the hearts of believers, the third to the Word which has been created by that Spirit, and thus the entire process of revelation can be conceived as perfectly possible without physical miracle other than the resurrection from the dead. This fact which the apostles, in their treatment of it, never place with the signs and wonders, is as essential as the incarnation, and, like it, a part of a new law, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept."

But here let me say that we are not now speaking of the supernatural in this revelation. As we have already seen, the supernatural is as necessary as is Christ. But the supernatural is not an incidental circumstance, it is a universal law. All nature was once, *i.e.* at first, supernatural. When God said, "Let there be light," light was supernatural to all pre-existing nature, but henceforth it became a part of that nature, a new order of things; "it became so."

So the incarnation was supernatural, but henceforth He abideth the same for ever. His resurrection was supernatural, but we believe that in Him all shall be made alive, and one day the resurrection life will be the order of the new and glorified nature. The gift of the Spirit on

Pentecost was supernatural, but henceforth it is the universal heritage of the Church. This entire revelation of God, including the new Word which grew out of it, is a supreme addition to the religious truth which man possessed before, and thus is supernatural, over and above what God had previously given, but it is now our permanent New Testament, the order and law and covenant of grace.

But all this might have taken place without even the temporary displacement or disturbance of those minor laws and orders of nature which previously existed, and which in the wisdom of God still continue. But as a matter of fact this was not the case. Signs and wonders did accompany this revelation of Jesus Christ and this gift of Holy Spirit. What was the character of these extraordinary phenomena? What was their function? What part do they fill in the process of Divine revelation?

1. In answering this question we may note some peculiarities of all biblical miracles. They are not sporadic. They cluster around the beginnings of the three great epochs of revelation, the Mosaic, the prophetic and the Christian. They are under a strict law of parcimony. They are not called in to solve all difficulties, and never to gratify curiosity. And in the view of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews they are all wrought by the power of faith, *i.e.*, by the superior power of the spiritual as contrasted with the physical nature.

2. These facts link the miracle with the epochs at which we find a marked increment of the gifts of the Divine Spirit. This was clearly true of the Hebrew people, and it may possibly extend to a still wider range. The Christian era and Pentecost, the eighth century B.C. and the prophets, the fourteenth century B.C. and Moses, mark important points in the world's spiritual history. There were doubtless others still beyond, but our records do not reach to them. But it is not difficult to link with the prophetic age such great movements as occurred in the sixth century in China and India, and in the fifth in Greece, and to find almost startling points of resemblance in the genesis of new conceptions of God and of moral and religious truth.

If thus miracles centre around the coming to humanity of a higher power of spiritual vision and life, and if they are a fact associated with the men to whom or through whom this power was given, then they may represent the authority of spirit over matter, and of spiritual law over material law. Rising still higher, as God is a Spirit, the Spirit who both creates and controls all material law, as He is Himself the archetype and foundation of all spiritual law, the presence of miracle is indicative in a peculiar sense of the presence of His Spirit. That which belongs to us in a limited measure, but in an increasing measure, the power as created in the image of God to bend the laws of nature to our will and purposes, belongs to Him in perfect fulness,

and need not be interpreted as an abrogation or contradiction of those laws, but simply as their true nature when brought into contact with higher spiritual power.

But however this may be, it is certain that the obedience of natural forces to the command of spiritual power has a peculiar tendency to arouse the religious sense of God's presence. In this respect it resembles though it far exceeds any unusual display of power in nature. The unusual as well as the supernatural stirs men to see God in His works. They rapidly grow blind to that which is familiar. They forget God in the sunrise and the dew, but perhaps remember Him in the thunderstorm or the earthquake. The earliest revelation of God in His works was to the child eyes of a young world, when all was new and fresh as Eden itself. A dull old world requires signs and wonders. And this brings us very near the scriptural presentation of the function of miracles. They are needful to blind eyes and deaf ears. Hence Christ when about to perform one of His most wonderful works says, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." Again to the spiritually blind Jews He says, "If I do not the works of My Father believe Me not. But if I do them though ye believe not Me, believe the works that ye may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I in the Father." Here the faith of receptive souls, those who recognise in the life and words of Christ the truth and

attributes of God, is contrasted with the lower faith of dull souls who must be awakened by mighty signs and wonders before they recognise God in Christ. So again further on He says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me" (the truth) "and My Father" (whose mighty works I have done). But the first appeal of Christ was ever to the truth. "If I say the truth why do ye not believe Me?" "While ye have the light, believe on the light that ye may become sons of the light." "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." So in the synoptic gospels, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign," and hence the teaching by parables that the power of spiritual discernment might be tested. Christ's view of miracles is thus perfectly clear. They were not needed to authenticate God's truth but to awaken men from spiritual torpor. And corresponding to this is the teaching of Paul in writing to the Corinthians concerning spiritual gifts, *i.e.* the miraculous accompaniments of the gift of the Holy Ghost, he says, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not, but prophesying" (the direct declaration of truth by the light and power of the Spirit), "is for a sign, not to the unbelieving but to them that believe."

The whole tenor of these various passages is



thus to present the miracle, not as the foundation upon which Christ's teaching rests, or upon which the authority of the spirit-given Word rests (that is an idea of later apologists dominated by the formal logic of Aristotle), but as a merciful condescension of God to the dullest souls. "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." They serve to awaken interest, to fix attention, they almost compel the assent of religious faith, and so prepare the way for that submission of the will to truth which is the essence of probational faith.

It thus follows that the ascription of these works to Satan, when they accompany the proclamation of truth appealing to conscience is the sin against the Holy Ghost. "All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewithsoever they blaspheme, but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin." This blasphemy was the final rejection of God's loudest call.

On the other hand, the miracle itself must be tested by the character of the teaching. If the doctrine is a doctrine of devils, then the signs and wonders are lying, and themselves the work of the devil. So again Paul, "Whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved."

“ And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error that they should believe a lie, that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” The scriptural view of the probational function of miracle in the process of God’s revelation of His truth to the moral nature of man thus seems perfectly clear.

*The Old Testament Revelation.*

As might well be expected, the Word created by the supreme revelation of God in Christ takes up into itself all previous revelation and is thus the completed Word. But at least a part of the Word created by previous revelation has come down to us, and is important for various purposes.

1. It enables us to understand the progressive character of the entire process of revelation, and its adaptation to the expanding capacity and wants of the race.
2. It enables us to understand the preparatory character of each successive stage of revelation, and its relation as growing out of all that has gone before so that the whole course of revelation becomes a grand prophetic system, in which there is a constant foreshowing and a definite prophetic faith and hope of good things to come.
3. It has preserved to us many beautiful forms of the Word which were wonderfully fitted to the world’s childhood, and which are still unsurpassed for leading the child mind of our

own age up to the full spiritual conceptions of Christianity. This old word has still its manifold uses, though it should never be substituted for the perfected word of the Gospel, as has too often been done in systems of so-called Christian theology, but which might more fitly be called Jewish theology. The new wine must not be put into old bottles nor the new cloth patched on to the old garment.

John the Baptist immediately preceded Christ as the apostles followed Him. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah, *i.e.* to sum up the work of all the prophets, by quickening into intense energy that moral conscience which they had built up through the labour of centuries, and to direct the Messianic hope, which it had been their mission to create, to the definite expectation of immediate fulfilment. "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" was thus the condensed burden of his prophetic ministry. John thus leads us directly into the heart of that prophetic order of which Christ calls him the last and greatest member, yea "more than a prophet" inasmuch as he completed all their work.

This work of the prophetic order from Samuel to Malachi extended over more than seven centuries. The coming of a prophet was not like the coming of Christ Himself, a revealing event in the world's history, nor were they always as Moses, Abraham and Noah, great actors in the events of revealing history. They were rather

the interpreters of the events as revealing the will of God. Sometimes they did little more than record the history in the religious spirit. Through them the word of the Lord came out of the history to the nation. Their position and work was thus exactly parallel to that of the apostles and prophetic men of the New Testament. These too were sometimes little more than recorders of the facts by which God was revealed in Christ. So the prophets in olden time out of the events of preceding or contemporary history proclaimed the Word of the Lord to the people of their age. The close relation of their work to its historic setting is its most marked characteristic. Sometimes the illuminating spirit enabled them to anticipate coming events. It certainly gave them a grand far-reaching foresight of the Messianic kingdom, but all this grew out of the real historic and religious life of their own time.

In the prophetic age then, revealing facts are just as fundamental and important as they are in the Christian. Here too they are accompanied by and interpreted by the illuminating spirit given to chosen men, and thus result in the word of the Lord for all the people.

There is no doubt that the revealing history which they interpreted was itself special, and at least providential. It was a line of history ordered of God for the purpose of making Himself known to men. It was paralleled by other lines of history, also we believe providential

and ordered for the material civilization, for the political development, and for the intellectual perfection of the race. But this was peculiarly religious, the history by which God was made known. But it was not on that account like the incarnation entirely supernatural. It was rather, and in this lies its peculiar interest, the revelation of God in common human history. Although the ordered line was special, the events which filled it up were the facts of our common human life; and the prophetic interpretation of these, as revealing the will of God for the time then present as well as the great purpose of God for the future, created a Divine word full of interest and lessons of instruction for all time.

Considered as a part of Divine revelation, the great distinguishing characteristic of the prophetic age is the Messianic hope. Side by side with this is the unfolding of the ethical ideals of religion and of its universal spirit. This last is something quite different from the development of a tribal monotheism into a universal religion. A tribal religion acknowledged gods many, and was essentially local and materialized in its conception. The prophets, on the other hand, from the beginning believed in a spiritual God, the only living and true God, the maker of heaven and earth. In the earlier stages they may have regarded Him as looking with disfavour upon the mass of the heathen given over to the worship of idols, or with more peculiar favour upon Israel,



the people who knew His name. But the universal spirit which rapidly grew up among them was the more generous faith that all the people of the earth have an interest in the heart and purpose of the living and true God. And as the brightness of the Messianic hope increased with successive generations, while it illuminated Mount Zion, its light reached to all the ends of the earth. Zion was the world's religious centre, and when her light should come it was to shine for all the nations.

The entire field of revelation in this age embraced two other aspects besides the more distinctly prophetic. One was priestly and more distinctly personal and practical in its character. It wrote history from the human and legal standpoint, and poetry out of national experience, each of them forming a word of God for the people.

The other aspect was ethical, intuitional and reflective, the work of the wise men, the only attempt at a Hebrew philosophy. The Hebrew teachers were accustomed to separate these religious writings from those of Moses and the prophets, as being the result of a lower illumination ; but no parts of the Old Testament Word have appealed more powerfully to the religious heart of humanity than many of these ancient hymns and prayers. And there can be little doubt that the faith of the Church that these too were created by the aid of the interpreting Spirit is well founded, and that thus they also are a true Word of God to men. They also

agree with prophecy in all growing out of the revealing facts of our common human life, and they touch in a peculiar way its most human sides, reaching down even to the proprieties and prudential maxims of daily common duties and courtesies. They leave nothing outside the scope of that religion which sanctifies our daily meals, and blesses our downsitting and uprising, and places God at our right hand in all our ways.

Our next step in moving back along the line of Divine revelation we may designate as *Institutional*, the great work of Moses. In studying this it is quite unnecessary to enter into the mazes of the Higher Criticism as to the authorship of the Pentateuch in whole or in part. We need for our purpose the admission of but a few general facts which we think will not be seriously called in question. The whole Hebrew tradition as preserved in the Old Testament and all later writings is so consistently and uniformly witness to the fact that Moses laid the broad foundations of the Hebrew civil and religious institutions, that this can scarcely be doubted. That these subsequently passed through the ordinary process of historic evolution may be granted, and the precise extent and course of that evolution may be matter of investigation; but this can scarcely affect the relation of the main fact to the general process of Divine revelation. This fact is put before us in the New Testament very tersely thus: "The law was given by Moses." The colossal grandeur with which Moses stands out in all after history is proof

positive that he is not a myth, or the insignificant author of a few brief precepts. He at least laid a foundation of law and institutions of religion of sufficient strength and vitality that it was able to produce and sustain the entire fabric as we know it to-day in the Pentateuch. This work the Hebrew people recognized as the most important and fundamental part of the Divine revelation given to their nation. "We know that God spake by Moses" was an unquestional article of their religious faith. This brings before us a new phase of the process of Divine revelation, God revealing His will in the foundation of nations with their laws and institutions. It is not necessary to enter minutely either into the human side or the Divine side of the process by which this was accomplished. The faith of the nation was clear that the illuminating wisdom from which the law was given was the gift of God, the inspiration of His Holy Spirit; and that the resulting body of law was of Divine as well as of human authority, binding not merely as the will of the nation, but as the will of God. But it is distinguished from the prophetic Word as the statutes, the precepts, the judgments of Jehovah, and constitutes the foundation upon which the prophetic Word was built.

Such a religious faith in the Divine authority of their law was by no means confined to the Hebrew people. Other nations also believed that their national foundations and institutions were from God. Nor is it necessary to regard

such a faith as absurd or a delusion. In the moral content of all law we should hear the voice of God, and so Paul acknowledges when to the Romans the masters of jurisprudence, he writes, "There is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God." We may refuse to interpret literally the mythical form in which this faith has often been expressed, and yet acknowledge the validity of the faith. Nor is it necessary, on the other hand, to depreciate the Hebrew law as if it were no better than that of other nations. But its superior excellency lies not in some accidental manner of its communication by miraculous agency, but in its moral character. In so far as that moral character is shared by the laws of other nations, they too were doubtless given by God to make the world better. The wisdom by which they commanded wise and righteous conduct may be recognised as a special gift of God to each nation. On the other hand, the imperfection of their justice and sometimes the deviating from justice and purity which marks them, show clearly that the human entered largely into their origin. Nor can this be altogether denied of the Hebrew law. Our Lord Himself points out at least one instance in which this accommodation to the moral imperfection of humanity made the law of Moses less than perfect. But all this does not contravene the fact that, in the Mosaic institutions there is an illumination of the Divine Spirit as much beyond that of other nations as they are superior to them

in the moral and religious teaching of their prophetic order. But we should miss the full measure of the Divinity of the Mosaic institutions if we overlooked their foundation in revealing facts of a special and even supernatural character. The great revealing event was the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt and their planting in the land of Canaan. In this work the presence of God was most emphatically manifested to religious faith. The memory of this period kept that faith alive for long centuries. And the events of the period are not merely extraordinary and special providences, but must be regarded as at least in part supernatural. Miracle here is not simply an attestation of Moses and his mission, but is a part of the revealing history which placed this people in a new and special relation to the living and true God. Out of this new relation grew their laws and institutions, embodying a Divine purpose to be wrought out through this people for the benefit of the whole world. To them were thus committed the oracles of God, and from them the Divine kingdom of truth and righteousness was to go forth to all the earth. These important facts differentiate the Hebrew law from all other national foundations ; and while their intellectual conception of the facts was still imperfect, their religious faith grasped the reality of the case. So the Psalmist says truly, " He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for His judgments they have not known them." In thus briefly sketching in broad outline the process and



method of God's revelation of Himself to men, it is impossible to enter into details of the Mosaic period of revelation. It must suffice to say that it laid the foundations of national and institutional religion and morality, upon which the subsequent religious work of prophets, priests and wise men was built. In the Old Testament of to-day we perhaps have not a minute detailed chronological history of the entire process, though we doubtless have the main outlines of such history sufficiently well preserved. But we have without doubt an accurate portraiture of the whole result as a creation of religious life and faith from Moses to Malachi. And this religious life and faith, while but preparatory to better things to come, is not unworthy of God as its author or of Christ as coming to build upon it the perfect revelation of God.

But this faith itself carries us back to a still more remote period in the process of Divine revelation, a period of which we have but the most fragmentary records. Before Moses, God was known in the world, and was worshipped by the fathers of the Hebrew people in forms suitable to their primitive life. The origin of these forms it is now perhaps impossible to trace. The Hebrew tradition makes no attempt to account for them. In the book of Genesis (origins) we have a collection of the Hebrew form of these oldest traditions, but they all take for granted as already existing a knowledge of God, and of moral principles, and of prayer

and sacrificial worship. But while they thus do not profess to describe the very beginning of religion in the history of the race, they do present to us traditions of important religious origins which are worthy of examination. In entering this period of tradition, we at once miss familiar forms which have been present with us up to this point. We have here no definite ministerial order of apostle or prophet, such as we can trace almost continuously from Moses to St John. We have no written word such as is supposed from Moses onward. The revelation of God exists as a family tradition, and the institutions of religion as a part of family life. At this point the ancient Hebrews were in this feature less advanced than some of their neighbours, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and others eastward. But as we gather up the knowledge of God and the type of moral life which appears in these few scattered family traditions from Abraham to Moses, we find it singularly pure both as moral and religious truth. While it strikes us as less developed than the religions of the more advanced nations, it is certainly not affected as they have been by mythical degeneration and moral corruption. It also maintains, as no contemporary religion does, the fundamental element of all religion conscious inward communion with God. The revealing events here are less striking, *i.e.* they involve less of the supernatural, and are more in the line of God's ordinary providence as toward men. The striking thing, the supernatural

thing, is the conscious intercourse of these men with God. The traditions have given us but little intimation of the manner of this communion. The facts only are recorded in the most direct terms such as, "The Lord had said unto Abraham," "The Lord appeared unto Abraham," etc. Once there is an extended vision, at another three men appear; but under all, the important fact is personal communion with God, a personal cognizance of the presence and will of God. The simple patriarchal lines of such men as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even though marked by here and there a moral blemish, still exhibit a remarkable type of lofty and even heroic faith in God, and a pattern of family religion rare even in far more advanced ages. It is out of this personal character and family religion that there arise the national institutions and the remarkable religious development of the future. But this Hebrew book of Origins preserves not only these oldest family traditions, but also a group of traditions which carry us out beyond the limits of even traditional history. These consist of broadly generalized accounts of Creation, of the beginning of human development, the origin and spread of sin, the peopling of the earth, the destruction of the race by a deluge, the variation of language, and the origin of nations. These are all treated from a religious point of view, *i.e.* are works of God and orderings or judgments of His providence. It is impossible to describe these ancient compositions by any one literary term. They are not

myths, and they are not properly historic traditions. How they were collected in their present form in the book of Genesis it is perhaps impossible now to determine. We know certainly that they existed, many of them at least, in other forms and among other peoples, and had been already reduced to writing before the time of Moses. We know, too, that in the process of the formation of the inspired Word, as we have briefly sketched it, they were collected and cast into their present form and placed in the forefront of the volume which presents to us the content of ancient revelation, and is its written word. They are thus made by the men whose office it was by voice or pen to deliver the Word to the nation, an integral part of that word; and their whole internal content and teaching, not as science, history, or philosophy, but as a presentation of religious truth, proves that they are neither an unworthy nor an unimportant part of that word. We have doubtless misinterpreted these early documents; we have in our blind zeal arrayed them against science and philosophy and history, and have read into them what they were never intended to say. We have failed to understand their poetical imagery, their deep intuitive views of nature and of man, their profoundly religious sense of the presence of God in all nature and all history, their dim traditional memories of far-off events lying beyond the range of either history or tradition; and so have set them in conflict with almost every department

of modern science or historical or archæological research. And then still more we have tried to heal the breach by the most awkward and puerile of reconciliations, true neither to Genesis nor yet to science. But these ancient documents set us out on the very forefront of the process of revelation. They gather up for us all the great revealing facts of prehistoric time. These facts are many of them either world-wide or age-long in their significance, and also in their continuous moral and religious effects; such as Creation, man, moral nature, the family, religious worship, labour, sin, suffering and death, personal communion with God, the growth of arts, the growth of nations, the divergence of languages, the mysterious lives of Enoch and Noah, leaving an indelible impress on the world's memory. But in them all we have read to us the primitive revelation of God to man, and it has cast the whole into forms of which the world, and especially the world's child-mind, has never grown weary. To some of these we shall return again in our exposition of Christian doctrine, and shall then endeavour to set forth what we conceive to be their true meaning as parts of the Word of ancient revelation. Here we need only say that this book itself, side by side with our studies in Anthropology and Comparative Religion, carries us back to the primitive revelation of God, by which man came first to know God, and to give Him a name, and to discern the right, and to be conscious of sin, and to lay hold of a hope of salvation. This



book of origins tells us, as all our modern scientific studies tell us, and as St Paul has said, that the beginning of all revelation is in God's work in nature, "That the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead."

From this brief review we may understand something of the unity and simplicity of God's method of revelation. Its foundation is laid in creation itself, as all creation reveals the Creator, and in man's capacity to know God in His works. In these God has been no respecter of persons. "Their line has gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." But from this universal foundation the great law of spiritual evolution has held, "Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." This law of evolution leads us to a family, a nation, and a line of history in which God has been revealed, constituting them for this purpose a chosen people. In this line of evolution (*apocalypse* St Paul calls it) there have appeared great epochs of the incoming of new and higher spiritual life, which finally culminate in the revelation of God in the face of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, through whose offering of Himself a sinful world may be reconciled, *i.e.* brought back to the Father's house, and a kingdom of universal truth and righteousness and peace with God established over the hearts of all men.

Thus this, like all the works and ways of God, is moving onward and upward through all the ages to the perfect glory of moral and spiritual perfection. This law of spiritual evolution seems to lie in the deepest nature of all intellectual, moral, and religious life. That life to be truly bestowed upon us cannot be imposed from without, it must be created by living growth from within. Only thus does it become an added power of life, fruitful for its own enlargement. To this law God's revelation has strictly conformed, each new stage appearing only in "the fulness of time." And the law of prophetic outlook which has governed it in all the past has not yet ceased to operate, for there is a glory of God "yet to be revealed," and its coming in will be hastened as the present revelation has its perfect work in the life of humanity.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WORD, ITS NATURE AND FUNCTION

IN our review of the process of revelation we have seen that from the time of Moses the Divine revelation has taken permanent form as a spoken or written Word. We have first the Law, then the prophetic Word, then the Word of prayer, praise, and wisdom, and finally the Gospel. This Word is in no way a mere history of the facts by which God is revealed, or of the process of revelation. It does to some extent embody the facts, presenting them as they were present to the observation or memory of men in its successive ages, and from it we may collect materials very valuable for the reconstruction of what has been called Scripture history. Throughout the greater part of this written Word the idea of history is altogether apart from the purpose or thoughts of the writers. And even where, as in the Gospels and Acts and some of the Old Testament books, the writer is consciously narrating facts, he arranges them not always chronologically, but often topically, as in the Gospel collections of our Lord's miracles, parables, and didactic discourses. The Word thus embodies facts and presents us with facts, but it does so as the basis of religious faith; and the

presentation is not to the historic imagination, to construct a perfect picture of the life and times, nor yet to the interest of the scientific historian, to trace the orderly sequence of events as they arise one from another, but a presentation of each fact to religious faith, as setting forth the power or the wisdom, the justice or the goodness, the character and the will of the great God who ruleth over all. In dealing with these facts it appears that the writers of the Word accepted the accredited human history of their time or the commonly known facts of their time, or the facts of nature as apprehended in the existing state of human knowledge, making no attempt to forestall historic criticism or scientific discovery by supernatural means. The message of the Word was a message from God concerning faith and duty; and while that message was founded on real facts of nature and history and human life, it dealt with those facts as known and read by all men; and its supreme business was with their interpretation as revealing God.

The Word is thus the world's interpreter of the facts by which God is revealed to men, not to reason, or to science, or to the historic imagination, but to religious faith. It takes those facts as they appear to and are known by the people of each successive age to which it speaks. In each age it appears to speak of those facts according to the manner of the people, *i.e.* in the accredited historic and scientific conceptions of its own time. Only thus could it fulfil its mission, which was to make

known God's will to all the people. Had it, for instance, in the first of Genesis forestalled the teachings of our geology, it would have remained a sealed book until the middle or end of the nineteenth century, and by the end of the twentieth would doubtless have been obsolete and discredited as well. Even to-day it would have been Greek to our children and to all but the men of the Schools. With a message for all men it must take the facts as they are known and read of all men, and from them set forth God's Word to the hearts and consciences of all the people.

For this function of the Word but two things are necessary: first, that the facts are real; secondly, that they are rightly interpreted. A defect on either of these points converts religious faith into superstition. True religious faith must rest on truth, truth in fact, and truth in its religious interpretation. The scientific conception may be a matter of minor importance in this regard. The progress of the sun through the heavens is a great fact, known and observed in all the ages. This fact is beautifully interpreted in the nineteenth Psalm: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." The form of scientific conception, *i.e.* the form in which the fact is held before the thought of the writer, is that familiar in that age, the firmament or solid canopy or tent in which the sun takes his daily journey from east to west, shedding light and heat, and showing



forth the goodness and power of his Creator. If, on the other hand, we conceive of this same fact as the earth ever turning from the darkness to the great source of light and heat which God hath established, is the old time lesson to religious faith either falsified or minified in its beauty and truth. Indeed the forms under which the race first conceived of the world's great facts have the advantage of being the simplest and most obvious, and hence the easiest to the great majority of men, and especially to children in all ages. The only fatal mistake is in setting them in array against advancing science, or in a supercilious science despising their religious significance. These principles do not apply with the same force and to the same extent to the results of modern historical criticism. All must admit that reasonable historical accuracy is necessary, if our religion is to be founded on fact. But on the other hand the lessons to be drawn from these facts lie in their broad characteristic outlines, and not in some minute circumstance which must be carefully elucidated by critical investigation. The accredited historic knowledge of the people, especially in the Old Testament, and their historic traditions appear to be sufficiently accurate for the purposes of the word, *i.e.* they are substantially true historic facts. We may even go a step further and recognise that the Old Testament uses poetic imagery and license in the religious interpretation of its ancient history. The parable and

allegory are also familiar forms for the interpretation of its religious ideas. But on the other hand we think that its poetic license never degenerates into legend, nor does its parable or allegory or symbolism become mere myth. The earnest, truth-loving, reverent spirit has, we think, everywhere clearly drawn the line which separates the degenerate and superstitious tendency of other religions from the free yet legitimate poetic beauty of the Old Testament religious spirit. But beyond this general conviction of trustworthiness we think it quite unnecessary to dogmatize in regard to the inerrancy of the Old Testament. We may quite safely allow reverent and truth-loving biblical critics to press their investigations with scientific fidelity to all facts, and we think there is not the slightest reason to fear that any trustworthy results, finally arrived at, will diminish aught from the moral and religious value of the Old Testament. The links which bind it to Christianity are not the precise date of any particular event, or the authorship, date or original form or editorial recasting of any particular book, but the fundamental truth which is embodied in the books themselves, and which cannot be eliminated by any results of criticism. The Old Testament as we now have it certainly existed before Christ came; and the moral and religious development which it contains and which prepared the way for Him certainly existed; and from this preparatory work of the law and the prophets as its founda-

tion, Christianity proceeded to build a new faith in Christ Jesus as the world's final revelation of God. And the demonstration for this faith is that He fulfils, *i.e.* completes all its moral and religious ideas, carrying them out to their full perfection, and satisfies all that its promises had held forth to the world's religious faith; and this He does not in a material and earthly sense, but in a Divine and spiritual. But when we come to the New Testament Word the relation of minute historical verity to our religious faith becomes much more vital. Christianity is essentially a religious faith founded on the facts of Christ's life, death and resurrection; and if these are not facts, then, as Paul says, our "faith is vain." If our gospels are the result of a legendary or a mythical development, or of any other process by which facts have been really falsified, then are we indeed building religious faith upon a false foundation, not upon facts, but upon fictions; and, thus far, our faith is not a true religious faith but a superstition.

But even this does not imply a miraculous verbal inerrancy, but such a truthful record or faithful portrait as an honest mind, quickened to its very best in memory by the deepest religious interest and sympathy, would furnish. Perhaps a portrait more nearly expresses the character of our gospel records than the word history. But in either case, there is required fidelity to facts. The fundamental question thus centres around the

gospel record, including the Acts. The detailed investigation of this question belongs to the department of Biblical Criticism and Introduction, rather than to theology proper, and with that we shall not intermeddle. The business of theology is with certain general principles which are really matters of religious faith, and denial of which has originated almost all attacks upon the authenticity of the Gospels both in primitive and in modern times. If a denial of the possibility of the supernatural is accepted as a fundamental and universal axiom of criticism, then no weight of evidence can establish the authenticity of the Gospels, for they are essentially a record throughout of the doings and sayings of a supernatural being.

On the other hand, apart from some such critical canon or presupposition, all external and collateral evidence favours the authenticity of the Gospel history. All references to the life and work of Christ and to the work of the apostles, to be met with in the sacred or profane writers of the first three centuries are in harmony with the records of the Gospels and Acts. If it be said that they are so because they are derived from these sources, then we are face to face with the fact, that from the generation next following the events, neither the Church nor the outside world knew any source of information differing from our Gospels. We can trace the books themselves recognised as authority in the Church back to the middle of the second century, and there coming out of the time

beyond. Between that and the middle of the first century, when they began to be written, we have within the New Testament collection, and in outside ecclesiastical and secular literature, a considerable number of references to the facts which they record, every one of which is in harmony with the Gospel records. If you say these are mere repetitions from the Gospels, then they recognise the Gospels as historic authority back to the time of men who were contemporaries and eye-witnesses of the events. If you regard them as independent traditions or memories, then they (such as Paul's attestation of the resurrection), constitute a strong body of corroborating evidence. Again, these records agree with each other in a remarkable manner, which involves independency of testimony as well as substantial unity of truth. There is thus no ground in the nature of the testimony unfavourable to the authenticity of the record ; but, on the other hand, the burden of proof is thrown on the objector. Here are four witnesses, two of them eye-witnesses, corroborated by all contemporary history and literature. Here are five books, the existence and acceptance of which can be traced back to the lifetime of men who conversed with the reputed authors. Some valid reason must be given to prove that such testimony is false, and some at least reasonable theory must be advanced to show how such testimony could exist and obtain currency, and yet be false.

The standing objection to the authenticity of the Gospels for the last two or three centuries is



that a miracle cannot possibly be true, is in itself such a violation of the order of nature as no intelligent man can credit.

Let it be noticed that this is first of all a modern objection. In the ages beyond, the religious faith of men was too deep to accept such a principle. It belongs peculiarly to the modern age.

Again, it is an objection not founded on reason, or upon our sense of moral truth, but upon human experience, *i.e.* observation. This takes it for granted that our observation or experience is the measure of all possibility and reality. The wider range of science which is now opened up to us in the modern doctrine of evolution, sets this quite aside as a quasi-scientific objection. We know now that again and again in the process of the universe, things have appeared in the world of which there was no previous experience, and that their appearance involved no suspension or abrogation of pre-existing laws of nature, but only the introduction of new forces, and new laws, and a higher order of being. Even within a narrower range, advancing science makes us familiar with things which fifty years ago would have been miracles of the first order. Now they are matters of every day occurrence, and how? Not by the suspension of nature's laws, but by the incoming of new intelligence, *i.e.* higher spiritual law. And so here, a hundred years ago, theologians talked of the suspension of nature's laws, and scientists denied that such was possible. To-day a wiser science and a wiser theology may both admit

that there are still more things in heaven and earth than we know, and that what we call miracle is simply the presence of a higher and hitherto unknown power. To-day true science will candidly and honestly investigate the facts, and form no *a priori* conclusions. True science is too modest, and has too deep a reverence for the infinite and unexplored ocean of truth which still lies before her, to make any hasty assertions as to what cannot be.

We might rest our investigation of the credibility of the Gospel record concerning Christ here, and say that sustained as it is by internal and external evidence, and assailed only on the basis of an unfounded assumption, we may confidently accept its testimony as the basis of our religious faith. But the utter weakness of the assault appears when we come to examine the theories which in our time have been advanced to account for the existence of the Gospels and of their testimony. These are three in number, each one excluding and overturning the other two. They are the mythical theory of Strauss, the legendary theory of Renan, and the tendency theory of Bauer. We pause for a moment to examine these, because each involves an important factor in the development of religious ideas in human history ; and it becomes important that we should understand the distinction between such development, and the formation of the Word of God as presented in the Gospels.

The myth is a peculiar product of the human mind. It finds its basis in facts of nature or of history; in this it agrees with the religious intuition. But instead of seeing in them the forces of purely spiritual and moral being, working out purposes of moral and Divine significance, it but dimly apprehends these, and by the help of the imagination reconstructs the action or fact in a supernatural form. We have already seen the results of the development of the religious spirit through myth. There is a gradual degeneration, as the imagination is influenced by immoral, capricious, and grotesque associations, and the reverence, the seriousness and the purity of the religious spirit is lost. Strauss's work was an effort to exhibit the Gospel narratives as a product of this process. It is a failure in the following aspects:

1. It fails to find natural circumstances or events which can with any show of plausibility be presented as the basis of the Gospel narratives.

2. The narratives themselves refuse to conform to any of the types to be found in the realm of myth. There is no play of the imagination, no introduction of the lower human passions, no sacrifice of moral and spiritual ideals. On the other hand, these narratives exhibit the highest type of moral and spiritual ideal that the mind of man has ever conceived.

3. There is an utter failure to show that this

was an age, and that there existed the circumstances in which alone the myth is possible. For the formation of the myth the poetic fancy must be active, the fundamental beliefs which are embodied in the myth must be well established, the critical faculty must be dormant, in fact the whole situation must be that which favours the indulgence of beautiful and pleasant day-dreams. On the other hand, these Gospel stories are utterly without the exuberance of poetic fancy ; there is no attempt at embellishment or at a magnifying of the wonderful ; the fundamental belief, viz., that this young carpenter of Galilee was a supernatural person, had itself to be created out of the most unpromising material ; and finally the age and circumstances were those of the hardest and most prosaic form of human life at the furthest possible remove from the golden age of myths. The mythical theory of the Gospels has now virtually disappeared.

As the myth is the product of an age of active imagination the legend is the product of an age of ignorance and credulity. It is the gradual growth by accretion, exaggeration, and distortion of a story which finally emerges as the supernatural. It requires time as well as darkness. The real facts must grow dim, and their original witnesses disappear, and step by step the picture be changed till the supernatural, or rather the unnatural, is evolved. Here again the essential conditions are lacking.

I. The time is insufficient. Ten years could

not under the most favourable circumstances produce such an extensive and self-consistent body of legend.

2. The persons and conditions are utterly impossible. Paul was neither a fool nor a knave, not an ignorant man, nor a willing and receptive believer. The first audiences of the Christian preachers were largely and bitterly hostile. The first preachers themselves were critically examined, and tried before hostile and able tribunals, and repeatedly sent to prison, and some of them to death for their testimony. The whole age, in fact, was critical towards them, and the circumstances were such that hostile criticism could not be avoided.

3. The product is not the product of the legendary process. It is not a disjointed, irrational, unnatural story; the human life is common, reasonable, natural life, and the Divine presence is at once self-consistent and presents the highest of all ideals of Divinity. The religious spirit is not that of the blind devotee, but is at once most natural and reasonable and pure. The legendary theory has thus, like the mythical, passed away in a single lifetime, and is now remembered as one of the curiosities of literature.

On the other hand, some fragments of Bauer's tendency theory still remain with us. It differs from the other two, in that it implies intelligence of a highly developed character, and hence a conscious or semi-conscious falsification of facts for a



definite purpose. That purpose is the support of the dogmas of a religious or theological party. There are two or more parties in the Church. Each has its own doctrine, *i.e.* peculiar view of the person and work of Christ; and each so pictures the facts as to support its own view. Bauer at first applied his theory to the Acts of the Apostles, but later on it was extended over the greater part of the New Testament. The genuineness of four books was admitted, *viz.*, the Epistles to the Romans, I. and II. Corinthians, and Galatians. Fortunately these four epistles embody the most important supernatural facts of Christianity. Christ is in them the Son of God; His death is the atonement for the world's sin; His authority is supreme and His kingdom divine; and all is attested by the greatest of all miracles, the resurrection from the dead. Now all this was written within twenty-five years after the crucifixion, the resurrection and the Pentecost. It was written while the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were still common in the Church, and were even subject to unseemly misuse. It was written while the greater part of the witnesses of the resurrection were yet alive. Could falsification in the face of contending parties have been possible under such circumstances? If Paul exaggerated or falsified his facts, he must have been instantly detected and exposed. In an age and amongst a people sufficiently advanced to form dogmatic parties and to write books against each other, legend is impossible, and myth is im-

possible, and any serious falsification of fact for the purposes of argument is impossible. There can be no doubt that the school of Bauer has vastly exaggerated the party strife of the apostolic age and its influence on the contents of the New Testament. But that such parties did exist, and that, owing to their existence, religious faith even in the New Testament advanced to the dogmatic form, and that this influenced such epistles as Romans and Galatians, and even the Epistles to the Corinthians, is doubtless true. But the very certainty of this is our guarantee for the fidelity with which the main facts of Christianity must have been transmitted to our time. Whatever tendency there may have been on the part of either party to exaggerate or falsify is more than counteracted by the critical watchfulness of their opponents.

The various attacks upon the authenticity of the documents which furnish us with the history of the founding of Christianity, or rather with its foundation facts, thus all fall to the ground, and we may rest satisfied that in the gospels and Acts we have the essential facts upon which the religious faith of Christianity was built. Has tradition added anything to these facts? We may safely answer absolutely nothing. The Apocryphal gospels and so-called apostolic traditions are the veriest trash, bearing on their face all the marks of legend, or pure fiction or clumsy myth. Even genuine documents of sub-apostolic age add not a single element of fact or doctrine. In the New

Testament alone we find the basis of all Christian doctrine, the facts by which God is revealed in Jesus Christ.

But in the New Testament we have not merely the authentic statement of revealing facts, but still further the interpretation of those facts as a religious faith. We may even add that, under the influence of controversy, this religious faith to some extent becomes clearly and consciously defined as dogma or doctrine.

It is, however, characteristic of the New Testament, and in fact of the whole scripture, that it is essentially religious faith, rather than intellectual dogma on religious subjects. The gradual growth of dogma is chiefly a matter of ecclesiastical history ; the interest of the New Testament centres around the living religious faith in Jesus Christ. As we have already seen, this new faith was not the mere product of man's religious nature called into exercise by the supernatural facts. It was the product of a supernatural illumination within, as well as of supernatural facts without. To the nature and results of this supernatural illumination we must next turn our attention.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

THE Word of God, whether spoken or written, has in all ages been the instrument by which living faith has been created in the hearts of men. In this work it has been found to be not an ordinary means of instruction or teaching, but accompanied by a special enlightening power, which quickens the moral and religious nature of man, and even stimulates his intellect, so that he apprehends its truth with an irresistible force of conviction. This Divine power accompanying the Word has been manifest in the whole course of the history of the Church. It was the case in the apostolic age. Paul says, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." So of the preaching of Peter, it is said, "While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word." And just after Pentecost itself, as Peter was preaching the word, it is said, "When they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" In virtue of this Divine power the word is called "the sword of the Spirit," and is de-

scribed in these words, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work;" and yet again thus, "The Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is even spoken of as possessing sanctifying and regenerating power, as in Peter, "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God which liveth and abideth;" and so also Christ, "Sanctify them in the truth: Thy Word is truth." Nor is this Divine power of the Word confined to the apostolic age or to apostolic men alone. It is the experience of the living Church in all the ages and, we may say with humility and gratitude, of our own time. The Word still creates living faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. This experience of a Divine convincing and enlightening power accompanying the Word goes hand in hand with the faith of the Church, that the word itself was originally created in the minds or on the lips of the men to whom it first came by a still greater energy of the same Spirit. In fact this belief in the Divine inspiration of the Word is so universal, so strongly imbedded in the religious faith of the Christian world, that the tendency is to an exaggerated conception of its method of



working. We may boldly assert that no man who has entered into the full measure of Christian experience is without this faith. His daily experience of communion with God through the Word keeps this faith alive in full energy. And this very prominence and importance of this faith as an element of our entire religious life, as leading us continually to feed that life "on the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby," makes it most important for the true understanding and profitable use of the Word that our faith in the inspiration of the Word should be an intelligent faith, founded on truth and fact, and not on some blind or even traditional misconception.

It does not need lengthy argument to prove that as the Word is now received and becomes a living faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, so it was originally created by the same power. All Christians at least will probably admit this ; and with those who are not Christians in the true inward sense, it would be perhaps useless to begin by a discussion of this point. A mere dogma of infallible inspiration would not, as we have already seen, compel a living faith ; and when the truth has once entered and begins to work with its own Divine power of conviction, the acknowledgment of its Divine origin will speedily follow. As Paul says, "If there come in one unbelieving, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all ; the secrets of his heart are made manifest ; and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed."

The questions which demand consideration are these :—

1. What is the nature or method of this Divine influence? or, at least, what was its effect upon the minds of the first preachers and writers of the Word.

2. What are the permanent qualities which have been thereby communicated to the Word itself?

In other words, inspiration is a subjective influence on the minds of the sacred writers, and is an objective quality of the Word. It is evident that these important questions cannot be answered from any *a priori* considerations. Our judgment or religious zeal can by no means determine God's method of teaching men His truth. This is a question which can only be answered by an appeal to facts, and these facts are to-day only to be found in the Word itself. Neither the antecedent Rabbinical opinions on the subject, nor the subsequent Patristic conceptions, can give us authoritative guidance. In fact these are as divergent among themselves as are the opinions of our own time; and besides are expressed so largely in figurative language, that they can scarcely be quoted for exact definition. They are the language often of an earnest religious faith, rather than of a clearly defined and carefully formed theological opinion. But it may be asked, why go beyond the expression of strong religious faith? The answer is that this faith is fundamental, inasmuch as it must govern all our use and understanding of the

Word of God. It must, therefore, be an intelligent faith, *i.e.* a faith which has emerged into clearly defined idea, and not a mere warm emotion. If the Word is to be the foundation of our entire religious faith, then we must not only feel its spiritual power of truth, but understand its method of bringing to us the truth. The history of religion shows us that, in regard to this and other important doctrines, the crudest rational speculations and the wildest fancies of imagination may attach themselves to warm religious feeling, if we are not careful to develop our religious ideas in harmony at once with religious faith, with real facts, with conscience and with reason. The religious intuition of every true Christian certainly and unmistakably finds in God's word the quality of Divine truth, but whether or not that quality involves historical and scientific inerrancy, as well as moral and religious truth, whether the form in which the truth is presented is to any extent affected by the infirmities of the human instrument, these are questions of fact, and not either of pure faith or *a priori* speculation or blind fanciful zeal.

We have said that the facts from which our two main questions are to be answered can only be found from the books themselves. We may further add that our study should be devoted most largely to the New Testament. We make this claim not because the Old Testament scriptures do not afford evidence of the quality of

inspiration and of the method of its operation. We believe that they furnish both. But certainly if anywhere the most perfect results of inspiration are to be found it is in the New Testament ; and if anywhere the highest form or method of operation of the spirit is to be found (and Paul says that even in the New Testament age there were diversities of gifts some higher and some lower and diversities of operations), it is in the case of such inspired men as Paul and John. So the Jewish Church judged the inspiration of Moses to be of a higher type than that of the prophets, psalmists and writers of wisdom. We will not assume that this is a correct judgment, but it certainly points to the probability that there are diversities of methods of the work of the spirit in the production of this word ; and if so, we are certainly justified in beginning at the point where we may find the work in its most perfect form and results.

There is another important reason for beginning our investigation with the New Testament ; we are here nearer to the facts not only in time, but also in manner of spiritual life and thought. The spiritual life of the Christian Church is continuous from the Apostolic age. The very forms of language used to set forth its spiritual conceptions date from that age. Our religious life is not or should not be Jewish but Christian. The entire intellectual, moral, and religious life of the earlier ages was doubtless upon a lower plane. Even if we should

find that at times in remote ages the operation of the inspiring spirit was after the manner of mantism, or clairvoyance or some other form of occultism, it by no means follows that we are to define the work of the Holy Spirit by such remote and inferior forms which may have been the only possible to the age or to the man. The manner in which God spoke to Balaam, even if we were certain that we knew all about it, is surely not to be the measure of his speaking to a Paul or a John.

On this question therefore the inductive method is certainly essential. We must study the facts and listen to the testimony of the men themselves. And we shall begin at the point where the men speak most fully, where the facts are most directly recorded, where we have, not a dim ancient tradition, but the living voice or pen of inspired men to whom we directly owe our own spiritual life and conceptions.

## CHAPTER V

### INSPIRATION AND THE CREATION OF THE WRITTEN WORD

INSPIRATION is the term used by common consent since the Apostolic age to denote the work of the Holy Spirit in the production of the Word, which is the instrument by which men are brought to a knowledge of God. In the definition of this term or rather of the work which it designates, it is quite useless to make the attempt by any *a priori* method. We are by no means qualified to say how God should proceed in this matter, or what should be the nature of the communication by which He makes Himself known. Here especially, we must be guided solely by a candid and careful examination of the facts. The theologian, to be honest, must be true to all ascertained facts; but in a question of such supreme importance, the facts should be examined with no ordinary care.

Two questions will cover the field before us, but these are closely related and at points interdependent.

1. What was the manner and effect of the influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of the sacred writers?



2. What is the distinctive character of the Word itself as a result of this influence?

*Subjective Inspiration.*

The answer to the first question may be reached along the following lines of study:—

1. The personal testimony of the New Testament writers touching the Spirit's influence and leading upon themselves.

2. The New Testament account of prophecy as a spiritual gift.

3. The relation of this to other spiritual gifts.

4. Its relation to the ordinary and abiding work of the Spirit as spiritual enlightenment.

If it be objected that this is an appeal to the men themselves to ascertain what are their own gifts, and that of this we should have some evidence outside of their own testimony, the answer is that we are not now seeking to establish the fact of inspiration, but to ascertain its nature. The fact is a part of the distinctive character of Christianity as unfolded in the history of revelation. If our studies have led us to any result, it is this, that Christianity was established in the world as the result of a supernatural power enabling men to understand moral and religious truth; and that as a result of this power resting upon men in the Apostolic Age, there grew up, first a spoken, and then a written word. The historical evidence of this fact from the New Testament and from all collateral testimony is, we think, indisputable. Our object now is to

reach a more exact conception of the nature of this influence as it wrought in the minds of these original authors of the Word. Of this, the only direct and natural source of information, is the testimony which they give as to this influence and its relation to their work as preachers and writers. All other sources must be indirect and inferential, and would be of very imperfect value apart from this. Nor is this source of information untrustworthy. Only direct and positive evidence to the contrary should lead us to distrust on this point the testimony of men who are the bearers to us of the most perfect religious truth which the mind of man has yet received. In the first place, as writers each one of these men addresses himself to his work in a perfectly natural and businesslike way. There is very frequently no preface, and just as frequently the preface makes no reference to the writer, and in but one instance to any supernatural qualification for his work, and that in a modest historical fashion. Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, we have nine probable authors. The first of these attacks his work in the most direct and historical fashion after the model of the ancient Hebrew records. It is like the documents in Genesis, "The book of the generations." When he twice speaks of himself, it is as of no remarkable person, but as "a certain man named Matthew sitting at the place of toll," and classed by the Pharisees with "publicans and sinners," or in the list of Apostles as "Matthew the publican." The

second writer in like manner adopts an ancient Hebrew method of stating his subject, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." In his narrative, his own name never occurs; and we know both these as authors of the first two gospels only by the MS. headings which date back to our oldest copies and translations, and by continuous historic testimony from the sub-Apostolic age. The third writer does introduce himself and speaks of his qualifications for his work, but not as supernatural, but as the ordinary common qualifications of an accurate historian. He receives his information from those who "from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the Word"; and he has himself "traced the course of all things accurately from the first," and he writes that his reader may "know the certainty" of these matters. In his second treatise the point where he himself takes part in the events is marked only by the use of the first person plural.

The fourth writer, again a Hebrew by education as well as parentage, adopts the Hebrew Levitical style, and refers to himself only in a supplemental fashion toward the close as writing to establish the religious faith of his readers, and if the last verses are from his hand as giving true testimony, though far short of a full account. His first epistle is absolutely without any personal reference except the use of the first personal pronoun, and throughout, he addresses his readers in the second person after the style of a loving

father and faithful pastor. With these may be classed James and Jude. James writes simply as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," and proceeds at once to pour out of the fulness of his heart the truth which he has to declare. Jude in the same way styles himself "a servant of Jesus Christ," but says, that "while he was giving all diligence to write" unto his readers "of the common salvation," he "was constrained to write," exhorting them "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Here is an inward consciousness which is at once natural and without boastful self-consciousness, and yet implies an unusual sense of responsibility. While he is engaged in diligent preparation for a written exposition of the "common salvation," of which he seems to regard his hearers as already possessing a general knowledge, he is constrained to write not an exposition or general treatise, but an "exhortation" to a pressing present duty, evidently to meet a pressing danger. The same spirit breathes through the last sentences of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the writer, in the most modest and deferential terms, refers to himself and his readers, "I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation."

Thus all these writers of the New Testament stand before us, either silently or by express though modest and unassuming statement, as careful painstaking and truthful recorders of the great facts of the Gospel, or as men who have

a message of truth or of exhortation which they feel constrained (a duty) to deliver to their fellow-christians, and this message in each case arises out of the historic circumstances of the case.

Two writers, Paul and Peter, remain, and one special book, the Revelation of John the Divine. Peter and Paul differ from the writers already considered in introducing themselves to their readers as Apostles, a term implying an office and authority of a special character. The use of this designation by Paul is limited by the following exceptions: first, the two epistles to the Thessalonians and that to the Philippians in which Timothy, or Silvanus and Timothy, are joined with him in the salutation, and the Epistle to Philemon which is of a personal character. Otherwise the use is constant, and implies that in these writings they were conscious of a religious authority implied in their office. They wrote as men conscious of a commission from Christ or from God. But this consciousness does not interfere with the natural relations of their Epistles. Each has its object arising out of the living history of the Church; and whatever is implied in the office and gifts of an apostle, the style and contents and occasion of each epistle arise naturally out of the circumstances, actions, and character of the churches. We thus obtain from the character of all the New Testament writings thus far examined, abundant evidence that the influence of the Holy Spirit has

not superseded the use of common literary forms, of personal peculiarities of style, of judgment and common sense in dealing with the matters in hand, or of the exercise of care in collecting facts and of judgment in their orderly arrangement and presentation. It may quicken, but it does not supersede the exercise of memory itself. It is thus no ecstatic, mantic state or trancelike vision, or loss of self-control, but a full conscious exercise of all the intellectual and moral powers, and literary gifts of the writer. Everywhere the spirits of the prophets are, in the words of Paul himself, "subject to the prophets." There may appear to be an exception to this in the book of Revelation, Peter's vision, and one or two visions of Paul. But if these are of a different nature (and we shall examine them presently) they are clearly the exception, not the rule. The natural gifts and faculties of inspired men have thus full play, and their work evinces literary ability of great variety of form, and of that highest order which arises from abundant fulness and clearness of thought and deep earnestness of moral nature. The influence of the Holy Spirit on these men is thus something which underlies and harmonises with this perfect exercise of their native powers according to their usual laws of action.

Omitting for the present the historical writers who speak of themselves only as asserting in a natural way the historical accuracy of their narrative, the writers of the Epistles each make use



of terms which will guide us to a more definite, positive conception of the work of the Spirit on the minds of inspired men. Peter and Paul write under consciousness of Apostolic office and authority. Jude and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews write as exhorters, a term also used frequently by Peter and Paul to describe their work in addressing the churches. James and John use neither of these terms, but none the less speak with the authority of Apostles and with the conviction and earnestness of exhorters. This gift of exhortation was one of the special gifts of the Spirit exercised by the prophets, as appears from 1 Cor. xiv. 3: "He that prophesieth speaketh unto edification, and exhortation and comfort." It is also constantly applied to the work of the Apostles themselves in addressing the churches, and is even used to designate the entire work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, as He is called by our Lord the Paraclete or Comforter, of which the verbal form is frequently rendered by our English "exhort," as in Hebrews xiii. 22.

The first inquiry to which we are thus led is, What is the work of the Spirit in the qualification of the Apostles for their office and work, especially that part of it which relates to their doctrine or teaching? The consideration of the prophetic gifts will easily follow this.

That the most essential part of the Apostolic office was the founding of the Church in doctrine will appear from the following considerations:—

1. In their original selection, He chose the

twelve "that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach" (Mark iii. 14). He made them understand that to them "is given the mystery of the kingdom of God" (iv. 11). To these "He privately expounded all things" (iv. 34), and from time to time He employed them as assistants in His work of teaching and preaching.

2. His final commission to them was to teach and preach as well as to admit men into the Church by the ordinance of baptism. Matt. xxviii. 19-20; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47, 48.

3. Out of this grew their own personal sense of responsibility as apostles, resulting in constant labour as teachers of the infant Church. Acts ii. 42; v. 42; vi. 4; viii. 14-25; xi. 22-26. In fact, almost all the entire history of the Acts of the Apostles might be quoted in illustration of the magnitude and importance of the Apostolic office in this respect. The position is beautifully summarised by St Paul in a single expression (Eph. ii. 20), "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone."

The work of the Spirit which produced the Scriptures is thus that work by which the Apostles were endowed for their office of founding the Christian Church by preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this work there are no sharers with or successors to Christ and His apostles and prophets mentioned or referred to in

the New Testament ; all others are builders upon the foundations thus laid (1 Cor. iii. 10-15).

Of the New Testament conception of this endowment of the Spirit for the Apostolic office, we have several extended presentations :—

1. Our Lord's words in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of St John's Gospel, especially the following : " But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you," xiv. 26. " But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me : and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning " (xv. 26, 27). " Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak, and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me ; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you " (xvi. 13, 14). These words, spoken by Christ Himself as words of a promise of which Luke as well as John is witness, and reflected as it were not only from the mirror of Apostolic memory, but also from that of experience, and recorded at the very close of the Apostolic age, give us a remarkably clear portrait of the subjective side of this work of the Spirit. It was nothing less than such an illumination of their

spiritual understanding as enabled them to grasp the full work of Christ for the world's salvation.

But this illumination was to come in no unnatural way, however supernatural it might be. It was a teaching in which many lessons were to be mastered, some of them with difficulty, as we see in the case of Peter himself. It was a remembrance quickened into activity by the loving joy inspired by the baptism of the Spirit. It was a guiding into truth along a progressive pathway, ordered of God in the history of the Apostolic age. It was a grace, of which one measure was given to Paul, and another to Peter, another to James, and yet another to John. The law of development and of employment of all natural gifts is thus given its full scope, as well as the law of spiritual enlightenment founded on a God-given capacity of faith.

2. St Paul has in three several passages described this process of spiritual enlightenment from his own experience. In the first of these, 1 Cor. ii. 6-16, he describes it as a Divine wisdom. This wisdom is not a matter of philosophy or of human science but is of God, and is revealed to man by the Spirit; and it makes known to us God's free gifts to those who love Him. It cannot even be expressed in the common worldly language of humanity, but must be both understood and expressed by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is thus a spiritual judgment or discernment, through which we understand the mind of Christ. It is the possession of this wisdom which

enables Paul to speak of himself and of Apollos and his fellow-apostles as "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

A second passage is found in 2 Cor. iv. 6, etc. After describing his sufficiency as a minister of the New Covenant as of God, which is a ministry not of the letter, *i.e.* of verbal forms to be repeated, but of the spirit, *i.e.* the inward power of truth, and speaking of the superior glory of this ministration and its transforming spiritual power, he goes on to say, "Seeing it is God that said light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not from ourselves." The third passage is closely related to this, as, like it, it brings the Apostolic endowment into close relation to his personal religious experience. It is found in Gal. i. 11-17: "For I make known unto you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." . . . "When it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me, but I went away into

Arabia." We do not think that either of these passages implies that Paul received his knowledge of the historic facts upon which the gospel is founded, the facts of Christ's life, death, and resurrection by a supernatural communication. With these the man who was a diligent student of all that pertained to his people could scarcely be unacquainted; and the very fact that he speaks of his unbelief, which is not a mere negative ignorance, but a rejection of truth presented, implies that the facts were known to him, and that he had rejected their spiritual significance. But it does imply that by the Holy Spirit he was taught the full saving significance of these facts, first in his own personal experience "to reveal His Son in me," and then in their significance for the salvation of Jew and Gentile, and that with a breadth and fulness of understanding not yet attained by those who had been apostles before him. Later he went up to Jerusalem, when his manner of preaching was called in question, and laid before the men of repute the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. These he says "imparted nothing to me; but contrariwise when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision, and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go unto the Gentiles and they



unto the circumcision." Then follows his account of his conflict with Peter whom he regards as weakly and even sinfully inconsistent, notwithstanding his Apostolic grace. These passages throw not a little light on the Apostolic gift of inspiration.

1. It was grounded in a living personal experience of Christian faith.

2. It led some into views of religious truth considerably in advance of others who had been much longer in the enjoyment of its influence.

3. It enabled those to grasp with hearty assent such more advanced truth when presented to them by Paul.

4. It was nevertheless probational and did not preserve even these men from moral weakness and inconsistency. It was not, therefore, an influence which made the Apostles either omniscient or infallible, but which led them into truth as God ordered, and as the needs of the Church required. One of Paul's expressions is peculiarly significant, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." Not only moral weakness but also mental and physical infirmities were still consistent with the possession of this Divine light and power.

To this Apostolic gift Paul refers in Eph. iii. 2-5, in these triumphant words, "If so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words, whereby

when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." . . . "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, etc.;" where its Divine glory is placed in contrast with his personal consciousness of unworthiness.

There are many other briefer passages which incidentally throw light on this inward consciousness of the Apostolic gift ; the following may serve as examples :—1 Cor. xii. 8 ; Col. i. 28 ; 2 Pet. iii. 15 ; 1 John v. 7-12. In these it is emphatically a revelation of Christ and a gift of wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

Before leaving this part of our subject, it should be noted that it is a gift of utterance as well as of understanding. On the day of Pentecost it was manifestly such, Acts ii. 4 ; so in the case of their first persecution, Acts iv. 12, 31 ; and of Stephen, vi. 10. To this also St Paul bears testimony, 1 Cor. i. 5, where it is extended beyond the Apostolic circle ; 1 Cor. ii. 13, where it extends to the choice of new and fitting words to express the new ideas of the gospel, as well as perhaps a style of discourse in harmony with the directness and simplicity of the truth.

From the pre-eminent Apostolic gift of the Holy Spirit we may turn now to a secondary form associated with it and included under it.

*New Testament Prophecy.*

This gift appears to have been by no means rare in the Apostolic age. It is applied by Peter to the entire result of the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. Christian prophets are referred to four times in the Acts specifically ; some of these being women, some of them persons who have not been included as New Testament writers, and some, persons who are elsewhere recognised as Apostles. From various passages in the epistles of Paul it appears that prophecy was by no means a rare gift in the Gentile Church. Its importance in the founding of the Church is manifest from the association of prophets with the Apostles in such passages as Eph. iii. 6, iv. 7, and from his estimate of it above other gifts, 1 Cor. xiv. 1, etc.

The most direct statement of the work of the prophet we have in 1 Cor. xiv. 3 : "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and comfort, and consolation." Edification is addressed to the understanding, the intelligence of our spiritual life ; hence Paul says, v. 19, "Howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." The foremost work of the prophet is thus the imparting of religious truth through the illumination of his own understanding ; for he speaks with his own understanding as well as to the understanding of the Church. The second element of the work of the prophet, translated in the Revised Version

comfort, but, we think, with the A.V. and the American revisers, better exhortation, is addressed to the moral nature. It is, to borrow Paul's words, "the Spirit helping our infirmities." The last, consolation or comfort, is addressed to the emotions and affections. It is such as the weeping sisters of Lazarus needed and received in their bereavement, John xi. 19, 31. The prophet is thus not a mere teacher, he is one who speaks out of the inward light and moral force, and joyous faith and warm love of his own spiritual being to the religious understanding, conscience, and heart of humanity.

Another important passage in the nature of prophecy is found in 2 Pet. i. 19-21: "We have the word of prophecy (made?) more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God being moved by the Holy Ghost."

We think few passages of Scripture have been more completely misunderstood than this. The subject of the entire section from verse 16 to the end is undoubtedly the certainty of the Christian faith. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." This he founds (*a*) on his testimony as an eye-witness of the glory of the transfiguration; but (*b*) further upon the prophetic word, still stronger than any testimony

of miracle in its power to create faith, inasmuch as through its testimony the inward light shines in each man's own heart, bringing him the clearest conviction and most perfect assurance of truth. Hence we think the reference is not to the Old Testament prophecy, but to the New with its appeal with Divine power to the understanding, conscience and hearts of men. Such prophetic truth is not the result of any individual investigation, decision, or explanation of truth. It is the inner light of the Divine Spirit which enables man thus to speak from God.

In exact harmony with these passages we have in Eph. iv. 7, etc., the prophets associated with Apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, as the complete spirit-given ministry of the Apostolic age; and their function is fully set forth in verses 12-16, as the unity of faith, the maturity of Christian manhood, the purity of doctrine, and the holding and speaking of the truth in love.

From these passages it appears that the prophets both extended and perfected the Church's knowledge of the things of God throughout the Apostolic age. The great business of prophecy was thus directly practical, and was concerned with present duties and dangers; and to meet these it declared the fulness of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. At times it reached to foresight of future events. This is implied in the promise, John xvi. 13, "He shall declare unto you the things which are to come"; and we have a practical example of it in Acts xi. 27-

30, as also in xx. 23, and xxi. 11. But this foresight of the future was quite a secondary matter, and always subservient to the proper purpose of the prophetic gift. We have no example of a prophetic revelation of either the past or the future after the manner of the mere diviner. A good illustration of the office of prophetic foresight or knowledge we have in Acts xiii. 1, etc. There is a definite communication of God's purpose concerning Barnabas and Saul with a view to the action of the Church. Other examples of this prophetic intimation of facts which affected duty we have in Acts ix. 10, etc., where Ananias is divinely directed to Saul; Acts. x. 1-23, the case of Cornelius and Peter, where the ancient method of vision reappears; xvi. 9, Paul's call to Macedonia. On the other hand, we have enlightened judgment directly in Acts xv. 28, 29; compare verse 9.

*The Relation of Inspiration to the Extraordinary Gifts and Ordinary Work of the Holy Spirit.*

After this study of the apostolic and prophetic gift, it will not be necessary to dwell at length on these subordinate points. The Apostles themselves were richly endued with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. On the other hand, prophecy, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, are nearly akin to inspiration itself; they seem to imply a measure of the same gift, and are declared to be the work of the same Spirit. In fact the apostolic and prophetic gifts are enumerated with the charismata in



1 Cor. xii. 28 ; but as the highest places in the Church, and as the greatest and most desirable gifts, 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

In like manner the ordinary enlightening work of the Spirit in the hearts of believers is so magnified by St John, 1 John ii. 20, 27, as to raise it to the seeming level of a lower form of inspiration. So in 1 Cor. xii. 13, Paul unites all the work of the Spirit in one expression, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body . . . and were all made to drink of one Spirit." There is thus no sharp line of distinction drawn in the New Testament between the various phases and degrees of the work of the Spirit.

Specialization in result and pre-eminence in degree alone separate the highest from the lowest, the gift of the apostles and prophets from other charismata, and both from the baptism of the Spirit given to all believers. In fact, the latter as perfect charity, is in Paul's view the greatest of all, as all others are so bound to the limitations of humanity as to be finally superseded by more perfect things to come.

This study of the prophetic gift in the New Testament will enable us to formulate a general statement as to the New Testament presentation of subjective inspiration.

#### *General Summary of Subjective Inspiration.*

1. Those, who following our Lord Jesus Christ, laid the foundations of Christianity by preaching

and writing, did so by the power of an abiding endowment of the Holy Spirit.

2. The foundation of this endowment was laid in a personal experience of the enlightening and renewing power of the Spirit, and a personal knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

3. This endowment unfolded, to each according to his measure, and by degrees, as required by the providential history of the Church, the entire Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as founded in His life, death, works, teaching, resurrection, and gift of the Holy Spirit, making them "sufficient ministers of the Word."

4. It included gifts of utterance which enabled them to convey this gospel to others, both as a spoken and as a written Word or Scripture.

5. It included an opening up to their minds of the Scriptures and institutions of the Old Testament, and of their relation to the Gospel of Christ, and to God's purpose of salvation for the whole world and all the ages in Christ.

6. It included an opening up to their minds of the scope and progress of the Kingdom of Christ in the world's future, and of its relation to eternal things. This was sometimes presented in direct and broad statements, as by Paul in Romans and Ephesians, sometimes for special reasons in veiled and allegorical form, as in the parables, and especially in the Apocalypse.

7. It included, in a pre-eminent degree, the insight or discernment both of moral judgment

and of religious faith; enabling these men to guide the Church in all matters of duty to God and man, and to exhibit to the faith of the Church "the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ."

8. There existed even in the Apostolic Church, various degrees or measures of this inspiration, some of which were quite imperfect; and also spurious imitations of it, carefully to be distinguished from the true work of the Spirit. Of these the Church was required to judge.

9. Even in its greatest fulness, those who possessed it recognised that they "had this treasure in earthen vessels"; and subordinated even their inspired judgment to the words of Christ, 1 Cor. vii. 25, 40.

### *Objective Inspiration.*

Our second question is, What are the Divine qualities attached to the Scripture as the product of this subjective inspiration? These qualities are expressed by St Paul in the term θεοπνευστος, God-inspired, which may be interpreted as signifying in a general way that the Word is both the product of the Holy Spirit, and the instrument through which He works. In both these relations the Word is partaker of the attributes of the Holy Spirit, especially the following:—

1. Truth, John xvii. 17-19; 2 Cor. vi. 7; Eph. i. 13.
2. Immutability and eternity; 1 Pet. i. 22-24.

## 3. Divine spiritual power and life.

It is in view of these Divine qualities that it is called the Word of God, Eph. vi. 17; 1 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 23. Yet it must be borne in mind that these high prerogatives belong not to the mere outward form, though that too has been glorified by the power of the Spirit, but to the inner content, the Spirit, and the truth. Even the letter of the new Covenant may become dead and deadly, the Spirit alone giveth life; 2 Cor. ii. 6. But of this Divine content of Spirit and truth, the form is thoroughly human. The words, the setting of thought and illustration, the modes of speaking of facts of nature and history, and countless other things which belong to the characteristics of human literature, all are after the manner of men, and of the common thinking of the age. They are the setting in contrast to the gem, the earthen vessel in contrast to the treasure. All this Paul has set forth in a striking way in 2 Cor. iii. 5, and iv. 7. Again, in 1 Cor. ii. 3-5, we have a further interpretation of the earthen vessel, where he tells us that, in so far as the Word as spoken by him was judged by human standards of rhetoric, oratory or science or philosophy, it partook of the weakness of the instrument. It was not human wisdom or perfection, but Divine truth and power which characterised it. It is very certain from these words that Paul made no claim to infallibility in matters of speculative

philosophy or science. It is by no means clear that he would have claimed infallibility in matters of historical information, though he certainly on all occasions laid claim to honesty.

Using Paul's figure to describe the human side of the Word, we may safely say that the earthen vessel determines the human form of the Word. This includes (*a*) language, and all that belongs to the mere expression of the thought; and (*b*) in all probability also current thought forms, modes of reasoning, conceptions of natural and other facts used for illustration or application of the truth; in fact all that does not constitute the substance of the truth itself. The question of the extent to which the human vessel thus affects the form in which God has given us His Word, is to be determined, not by *a priori* considerations, but from careful study of the writings themselves as literature, whether historic, poetic, or epistolary in form. There is no doubt that the Divine Spirit and truth in these men often raised them above their natural level, even in the expression of their thought and its literary form. Hence we must not be too ready to accept supposed imperfections. On the other hand, human limitation is not to be regarded as an unreasonable thing, or as detracting from the Divine value of the Word. But still further we find clearly that the earthen vessel can receive but a limited measure of Divine truth. On this fact the whole doctrine of progressive revelation rests. As the human capacity to receive has increased,

God has given more. The inspiration of Pentecost did not give Peter the full measure of truth which he himself afterwards received ; and possibly he never reached the measure given to Paul and John. If Second Peter be genuine, even to the end he found the wisdom given to Paul "hard to be understood." These principles will find special illustration while we consider very briefly—

*The Inspiration of the Old Testament.*

It is very certain that the prophets of the Old Testament, like the apostles and prophets of the New, claimed to speak the Word of God ; Isa. vi., and the first verses of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are examples of this. This claim is clearly recognised by Christ and His Apostles ; and is referred to the same Spirit who inspired the men of the new dispensation. This appears in a general way from our Lord's appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures, though He makes no dogmatic assertion as to their inspiration. Heb. i. 1 is quite explicit, as is 1 Pet. i. 11, and probably 2 Tim. iii. 16. The Spirit of the Old Testament was the Spirit of Christ ; and God spake by the prophets.

But in the interpretation of these general statements, we must observe also the following facts set forth in the New Testament and even recognised by the prophets themselves :—

1. The measure of the Spirit under the Old



Testament was not the fulness of the gift under the new dispensation, in these respects—

- (a) Things fully revealed in the New were but partially disclosed under the Old ; 1 Pet. i. 10-12 ; Heb. xi. 40.
- (b) The entire resulting dispensation was in consequence imperfect and temporary ; see Matt. xix. 8 ; Acts xv. 10 ; 2 Cor. iii. 7-11 ; Gal. iii. 23-25 ; iv. 3, 9, 25, 26 ; Heb. x. 1-9 ; xii. 18-27.

2. The gift of inspiration sometimes appears as occasional or sporadic, and in forms in which the conscious permanent endowments are less prominent than sudden spiritual rapture, or involuntary vision or foresight. Certainly Paul could not have said of many of these Old Testament seers that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." This, however, applies but slightly to the later and more advanced inspiration of the Old Testament. All the *writers* of the Jewish canon approach more nearly the permanent spiritual endowments of the New Testament. Sporadic inspiration, and forms of inspiration which might be called mechanical and almost unconscious, belong to the earlier periods, and to men outside the chosen line which God was training for His service. They belong to an age in which the instrument is not yet fully fitted to receive and understand the Word. In view of these facts we must recognise—

- 1. The progressive development of revelation under the Old Testament.

2. That the truth communicated was at first rudimentary, and its apprehension imperfect.

3. That the methods of the operation of the Spirit are fitted to the childhood of the race and even of the chosen people.

4. That its divinity appears not only in its fundamental, moral, and religious truth, but still more in the prophetic promise through which it is full of better things to come.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OFFICE AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

THE office or function of Scripture, and of the Word of God in its still wider forms, is to convey to the conscience and religious faith of men the saving truth of the Gospel. It is the office of the entire ministry, for this ministry is pre-eminently a ministry of the Word. Besides many other passages it is comprehensively set forth in a passage to which reference has already been made, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. There the office of Scripture depends upon its inspiration. It is as inspired of God that the Scripture "is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." This office it fulfils by the power of the Spirit and as the truth. "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance," 1 Thess. i. 5. And so Christ says to those to whom He spoke the Word, "If ye abide in My Word then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Its power is the power of truth and of the Spirit."

It is this power which is referred to in the words, "The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is of the very nature of truth and love, their inward energy, to create faith. Only moral obduracy and blindness can resist its power. The Word is given everywhere, not as a formal outward rule of conduct and thinking, but as an inward living power of faith and of motive to right life. The New Testament, therefore, constantly magnifies the Divine power of the Word, and says little about its authority.

We have already seen that authority alone cannot command living faith. That implies the vital touch of truth itself with the living spirit. When this has taken place, authority or external influence of any kind is no longer needed. We are no longer under tutors and governors, but have found the Christ, through whom we know the truth which makes us free. We submit to authority, acquiesce in or even assent or consent to its dictates, or trust to its direction. But all this implies our spiritual weakness, ignorance, blindness. The Samaritans were led to Christ by the authority of the woman from the well but when they had listened to Him for themselves, they no longer needed such authority. Authority is thus first of all a guide to the ignorant, a leader to those who are in darkness,

but it fails of its purpose unless it leads to knowledge—to light. Authority in the original and proper sense of the term belongs to a person. It is the distinguishing quality of a ruler, a law-giver, a judge, an arbiter, an expert in matters of knowledge. From this use arises by metonymy its application to a code of laws, a creed, a body of doctrine or teaching, as the test by which the judge decides, and which can be applied as a standard or measure of truth. This is its use for correction, and implies not only ignorance, but error. That both these are characteristic of humanity, especially in matters of religion, is so true that authority is the attribute of Scripture to which we most frequently apply ourselves. In contrast with this lower stage in that described by St John (1 John ii. 27), “And as for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him.” This state is not one of erratic self-directed dogmatism, but one of settled abiding in the light received from the Word. The Word is no longer an external guide to the blind, but a light shining into the recovered vision. St Peter combines both in 2 Pet. i. 19, where, referring to the prophetic word, he says, “Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

Besides these functions of the Authority of Scripture as the guide to the ignorant and the corrector of error, it is also set before us as the standard of teaching, "Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith," which touches this point if we interpret it with many later expositors of the *regula fidei*. Certainly all these three aspects of the Authority of the Word are very clearly set forth in the Epistles to Timothy, when the necessity for such authority had become clearly evident. Already Paul found men "teaching a different doctrine," and "giving heed to fables and endless genealogies, the which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith." To this he opposes "the sound doctrine, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God which was committed to my trust." So the "doctrine of devils," "lies in hypocrisy," "old wives' fables," "questionings and disputes of words," "profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called," "words to no profit," "foolish and ignorant questionings," are throughout these Epistles opposed to "the truth," "the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed," "the teaching," "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness," "the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from Me" "the word of truth," "the sacred writings," "Scripture inspired of God." The whole argument of these two epistles, thus by every



variety of expression asserts the authority of the Apostolic Word, whether spoken or written, as against the prevailing forms of error which already threatened religious faith. Even at this early period these errors had ranged themselves under the two fundamental classes which have appeared in all the ages. They were either historical errors, the superstitious substitution of fables for the attested facts upon which the gospel was founded ; or they were speculative errors, the substitution of questions, and reasonings, and a false gnosis, for the luminous intuition of faith which laid hold with full assurance of the truth of God, or which discerned the way of righteousness with full conviction of conscience.

That the Apostolic Word was thus the acknowledged standard of faith and doctrine at the close of the Apostolic age itself, is thus quite clear from the evidence of these epistles. This evidence is corroborated by the Epistle to Titus, by that to Hebrews (see Heb. ii. 1-4), by Second Peter, John and Jude.

One question remains : Are there collateral or co-ordinate authorities, or standards, or sources of Christian doctrine ? This question has, in the history of the Church, taken three directions : (1) It has been claimed that out of the original spoken Word there has been preserved in the Church a continuous tradition of teaching, which expounds and enlarges the truth to be gathered from the written Word. (2) It is claimed that to the Church, especially in its ministry, has descended

the Apostolic authority and gift of declaring God's Word. (3) It is claimed that this gift still abides in the inner light which is given to every true Christian. Tradition, the Church, the illuminating spirit, in the individual believer are thus made co-ordinate authority with the written Apostolic Word.

Of these three, the last is so inconsistent with all unity of faith and standard of teaching, and has been so fruitful of error in the Church wherever it has appeared, that it has been rejected by the great body of believers. The illuminating spirit has its office, enabling our faith to understand the truth presented in the Word, which is the sword or instrument which the Spirit uses to bring conviction to the hearts of men. The words of St John, which we have already quoted, clearly point to Christians who are already established in the truth, to men who are enlightened by the Spirit. These need no longer the leading of human teachers. Their spiritual understanding is exercised to discern the truth, and they easily distinguish it from error. But whence did they receive the truth at first? Certainly from the Word of God. This word is, it is true, no longer to them an outward and mechanical guide, but an inward fulness of truth and light. But it is so because "that" (truth) "abides in them which they heard from the beginning." The illuminating Spirit is thus not in them as a discoverer of new truth, at variance with the old, but as the abiding light of the old truth; and it is only on

the condition of this which they heard from the beginning abiding in them that they "also abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 John ii. 24). The anointing itself is the same which "taught them" when in the beginning they first heard the Word. This inward illumination, then, in which St John rejoices as teaching these believers all things, is not co-ordinate with, or in any way capable of being opposed to, or added to, the Word as a standard of truth, but is nothing other than the power by which the Spirit accompanies the Word to give it effect in our faith, and its teaching is the teaching of the Word itself, in which the truly enlightened man "*abides*." The Word is still, and always, his original fountain of truth. The illumination is not to take the place of the Word, but to open our understanding to comprehend it. Even in the Apostolic age itself, while the gift of the Spirit belonged to all believers, the Church turned to the Apostles and prophets, and finally to Christ as the only foundation on which their faith could build.

The other two proposed standards are each embodied in the Church; and include, on the one side, the traditional teaching of the Church supposed to descend from Apostolic times, and, on the other, the decisions of the Church through its offices and councils to whom the Apostolic gift and authority is supposed to descend. It is indeed quite clear that in the Epistles to Timothy the Church is regarded as the "pillar or support" by which the truth is upheld, and that upon the

ministers of the Church is laid the responsibility of committing it as a sacred deposit to "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." But the authority of all this is none other than the authority of the original deposit. There must be clear evidence that the teaching of the Church to-day is the original teaching of the Apostles, and our only and final evidence of this is comparison with the monuments of the Apostolic age—the writings which remain to us. These are all included in the New Testament, and to their teaching the writings of the next age add not a single point of doctrine. At the very point where tradition, if it can bring us anything of value to be added to the written Word, should be the richest in truly apostolic teaching, it has absolutely nothing to add to New Testament doctrine. That which first makes itself known by written monuments, only several generations after the death of all the Apostles, we may certainly claim to test by the Apostolic monuments themselves.

We have already briefly considered the authority of the Church as a source from which we may draw materials for our theology. In so far as it represents the common faith of living Christians, we have seen its value in correcting the personal errors of individual Christian men. Individual faith receives truth; but is not itself the measure of truth. Even the faith of a Peter was, at least at one time, short of the full measure of truth. Certainly the statement of truth which represents the faith of a great body of Christians, and that for many suc-

cessive generations, is a more perfect and adequate statement than that which represents the faith of any one individual. But still history makes it very evident that the faith of even the largest body of Christians, representing the longest succession of time, and the greatest variety of circumstance, may be very far from exhausting the full content of the Apostolic Word, or reflecting perfectly even its most fundamental truth. The Church may be a more perfect interpreter of the Word than the individual, and both the Church and the individual have their distinct duty in the reception of truth as living faith, and in its presentation to the world; but no individual, no Church, not even the Church universal, can claim the highest authority as a court of appeal when the question is, What is Christian truth? That place can be accorded to the teaching of Christ alone, and after Him to His inspired Apostles; and the abiding monument of their teaching is the written Word. This word began to be spoken by the Lord, but was fully unfolded from Him as its author by His Apostles and prophets through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit which inspired and guided them to preach inspired and guided them to write. And this Word, created from Christ as the truth in the Apostolic age, has become the source of truth for all the world and all the ages, and the light to guide those that are in darkness and doubt, and the monitor to warn and call back all who are wandering into error, and the court of appeal in the

controversies which sometimes separate brethren in the faith. This supreme place of authority and influence it can share with neither the Church nor the individual conscience or understanding. And yet to neither the one nor the other does it present itself as an arbitrary power to force their faith, but as the light of truth in which both alike rejoice with full assurance of faith.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE CANON

THE final question to be investigated is, To what body of truth or to what writings may we ascribe these Divine attributes and power? and to what books does this apostolic authority belong? These questions were at the first by no means identical. While all Scripture was inspired, it was by no means the case that all inspired teaching, or even writing, was included in the canonical Scripture. According to St John's Gospel, even our Lord's doings and teachings have not been all so included one by one. It is quite possible, or even probable, that St Paul wrote epistles which have not been so included. The epistle of Barnabas, if genuine, was written by a man who possessed at least prophetic inspiration, Acts xiii. 1, and yet it is not so included. If the conception which we have so far formed of this subject is correct, inspiration is primarily of the truth, and was given widely and in various degrees for the unfolding and dissemination of the truth in the Apostolic age. The evidence of inspiration was direct and personal. The presence of the Holy Spirit unfolding the truth, and applying it with

power, was consciously manifest, both to the speaker and to the hearer. And without doubt the Spirit abides with the truth thus originally given throughout all time, and in every form into which it may be rendered. It may be translated into all languages ; if faithfully translated it is still the inspired Word of God. It may be recast into all manner of literary forms ; if in the process the truth abides, it is still endued with the power of the Spirit. Nothing can be more certain than that the inspiring Spirit thus demonstrated its own presence to all men in the Apostolic age ; and this direct personal demonstration of the presence and power of the Spirit abides in the Church wherever the gospel is preached in its living power. Accompanying this inward demonstration, there were also frequently, but not always, accompanying signs and wonders, miraculous gifts of the Spirit, the office of which was, as we have seen, to make the presence of God manifest even to souls spiritually dull or dead. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit in apostles, prophets, and even evangelists and teachers and active workers in other offices of the Church, was thus a thing historically manifest throughout the Apostolic age ; it was known and read of all men. Inspired men were themselves conscious of its light and power ; even obdurate sinners were amazed at its results ; and unwillingly trembled under its convictions. But when, towards the close of the Apostolic age,

the question of the standard of Christian doctrine or teaching was practically raised by the appearance of serious errors, such as are referred to in the pastoral epistles, and by St John, Peter and Jude, it was by no means sufficient to say, this is the teaching of inspired men, for there was a spurious inspiration or pretence of inspiration abroad, and false prophets and even lying signs and wonders deceived the people. The appeal was therefore not to inspiration, but to the original apostolic teaching, to that which they had heard "from the beginning," to "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." This appeal from "other gospels" and "divers and strange teachings" to "sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ," began to be made distinctly in the Apostolic age, and is prominent in the writers of the sub-Apostolic age. At first it took various forms. The apostolic writings were not yet generally or widely distributed or within reach of the outlying churches. Hence men who had heard the Apostles, churches planted by the Apostles, and the bishops or overseers of the churches as the guardians of their purity, were all appealed to for the purpose of determining *the original apostolic doctrine*. This appeal to original testimony began in the Apostolic age itself, as appears from Luke i. 3, and Heb. ii. 3. If we extend the sub-Apostolic age to A.D. 120, the period during which intelligent pupils and auditors of the Apostles were still

living, we shall find in the brief writings remaining from that period—

1. Evident familiarity with the doctrines and facts set forth in the New Testament writings.

2. Verbal correspondences which clearly imply a knowledge of individual books of the New Testament.

3. Reference to the teaching which was from the beginning, and to apostolic teaching, as setting forth the true Christian faith in which the Church is exhorted to abide.

4. A constant and most abundant reference to the Old Testament, and quotation from it as Scripture, Holy Scripture, and the oracles of God.

The following from Bishop Lightfoot's translation of the epistle of Clement clearly sets out the common estimation of apostolic authority :—

“The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed in the Word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the Kingdom of God should come.”

This passage shows clearly that by Clement and his time the Apostles were recognised as

the divinely ordered expositors of the Christian faith. To the same fact Barnabas seems to refer in the expression (ch. v.), "He chose His own Apostles who were to proclaim His Gospel." Towards the close of this period the importance of the bishops as the guardians of the true faith, is seen from such passages as the following, from Ignatius to the Ephesians, chapter iii., "I was forward to exhort you that ye run in harmony with the mind of God; for Jesus Christ also, our inseparable life is the mind of the Father, even as the bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth are in the mind of Jesus Christ." Another method of arriving at the facts of the faith during this traditional period is presented by Bishop Lightfoot in the fragments of Papias preserved by Eusebius: "On any occasion when a person came (in my way) who had been a follower of the elders I would inquire about the discourses of the elders—what was said by Andrew, or by Peter, or by Philip, or by Thomas or James, or by John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, and what Aristion and the elder John, the disciples of the Lord say. For I did not think that I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from the living and abiding voice."

A similar appeal to the elders is found in the next age in Irenæus: "As I have heard from a certain elder who had heard from those who had seen the Apostles, and from their scholars," etc.

It is evident that at this point the appeal

to oral traditional teaching as to the contents of the apostolic doctrine is already in the third or fourth generation becoming indistinct, and we are thus prepared for the second period in which the appeal to and quotation from the apostolic writings become more definite, and in which at its close definite lists of the New Testament Books are existent. This period runs from A.D. 120 to 170 after which the books used in the churches are definitely divided into those universally acknowledged and those which are questioned.

In this period there is evidence—

1. That the books were used and read in the churches in their public worship.
2. That they were now the chief source of the living knowledge of apostolic doctrine.
3. That they were being carefully preserved and collected, and copies and translations made.
4. That they were appealed to in controversy concerning the true faith.

The faith in the New Testament which now became prevalent in the Church universal is thus summed up by Tertullian as quoted by Bishop Westcott.

“ If it is acknowledged that that is more true which is more ancient, that more ancient which is even from the beginning, that from the beginning which is from the Apostles ; it will in like manner assuredly be acknowledged that that has been derived by tradition from the Apostles which has been preserved inviolate in the churches



of the Apostles. Let us see what milk the Corinthians drank from Paul ; to what rule the Galatians were recalled by his reproofs ; what is read by the Philippians, the Thessalonians, the Ephesians ; what is the testimony of the Romans, who are nearest to us, to whom Peter and Paul left the Gospel, and that sealed by their own blood. We have moreover churches founded by John. For even if Marcion rejects his Apocalypse, still the succession of bishops (in the seven churches), if traced to its source, will rest on the authority of John. And the noble descent of other churches is recognised in the same manner. I say then that among them, and not only among the apostolic churches, but among all the churches which are united to them in Christian fellowship, that the Gospel of Luke which we earnestly defend has been maintained from its first publication. And the same authority of the apostolic churches will uphold the other gospels which we have in due succession, and through them and according to their usage, I mean those of (the Apostles) Matthew and John ; although that which was published by Mark may also be maintained to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was : for the narrative of Luke also is generally ascribed to Paul ; (since) it is allowable that that which scholars publish should be regarded as their master's work. These are for the most part the summary arguments which we employ when we argue about the gospels against heretics,

maintaining both the order of time which sets aside the later work of forgers, and the authority of churches which uphold the tradition of the Apostles; because truth necessarily precedes forgery, and proceeds from those to whom it has been delivered." From this testimony, coming from the generation in which the work of collecting the books was substantially completed, we have clear evidence of two things—

1. That the principle which guided the Church in her judgment of the proper books to be received was that of apostolic origin and authority.

2. That the evidence upon which this fact was decided was the testimony of the apostolic churches by whom these books had been at first received and in whose hands they had been carefully preserved. In this way in the third and fourth generation after they were written the books took the place of oral tradition as the acknowledged exposition of the apostolic doctrine which was by all parties admitted as the true Christian teaching.

We have seen already by evidence at first incidental, and later more direct, that from the beginning these apostolic writings were prized most devoutly by the churches and diligently used for their religious instruction both publicly and privately. They were read in their assemblies for worship, and they were used in their schools for the instruction of novitiates. We now find this reverential regard assuming not

only a practical but also a dogmatic form. The collected books begin to be spoken of Scripture, and as the New Covenant or Testament, and the Gospels and Epistles to be compared to Moses and the prophets. The reverence for the Old Testament Scriptures which characterised the Jews had been easily transferred to the Christian Church. As in the apostolic so in the sub-apostolic writings the Old Testament is largely quoted with devout faith as the Word of God. While pointing out its limitations and its transitory elements both our Lord and His Apostles had never for one moment discouraged or disturbed the religious faith which attached itself to the Old Testament Scriptures. Their work was "not to destroy the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil." The churches were thus accustomed from the beginning to the idea of a book of the Covenant, of sacred Scripture which they regarded as the Word of God. This last term had also been applied from the beginning to the preaching and teaching. How soon it was extended to their writings we cannot tell, but certainly from the time of Tertullian onward that idea was familiar to the Christian Church. Simultaneously there was transferred to the new body of Scripture the entire dogmatic view of inspiration and accompanying qualities which was held in the Jewish Church in regard to the Ancient Scripture. This was a very easy matter to men who from the very first had recognised the presence and influence of the

Holy Spirit in both the preaching and the writings of the Apostles.

The final stage of the development of the doctrine of the New Testament Scripture in the Church was again parallel to the Old Testament Scripture. The canon of the Old Testament had been finally fixed under the fires of persecution. When the attempt was made to overthrow the Jewish religion by the complete destruction of all copies of its sacred books, and when every Jew was called upon to preserve and defend them with his life, their collection and identification became a matter of supreme importance. A similar crisis occurred in the history of the New Testament Canon. The persecution of Diocletian, A.D. 303-311, created for the Church the new sin of the traditor, that of the man who delivered over the sacred books to be destroyed. The extreme repugnance with which this crime was regarded, was itself a most unmistakable evidence of the place which the sacred books occupied in the regard of the Church. It was also most positive evidence of the existence and collection of the canon in somewhat complete form. It was further proof that copies of these sacred books were well known and multiplied.

But besides being evidence of all this, the persecution, as of old, led to the more exact definition of the individual books which made up this body of sacred Scripture. Some were ready to save their lives by delivering up "useless writings," and though many regarded this

as an unworthy subterfuge, inconsistent with the courageous testimony of the martyr to his faith in God's Word, inasmuch as before his enemies he professedly denied that Word, or at least turned it over to destruction, it became important that the Word should be distinguished from all other writings. As the Church passed through this furnace of fire, her regard for the sacred books became intensified by the very sufferings endured in their defence. They were now consecrated by blood and stood forth as the symbols of the entire Christian faith.

The only step which now remained to complete the faith of the New Scriptures was a formal decision of an Ecclesiastical Council. The way was prepared for this in the general appeal to Scripture by both parties on the great questions decided at Nicæa. Next followed a brief sentence of a Synod held at Gangra, which speaks thus :—  
“We desire that what has been handed down to us by the Divine Scriptures and by the apostolic traditions, should be done in the Church.” See Westcott, Part. III. Similarly the Council of Laodicea decided that only the canonical books of the Old and New Testament should be read in the Church. Probably the first list of canonical books of the New Testament sanctioned by synodical authority, was that passed at Carthage, A.D. 397, and this is generally regarded in the Western Church as the settlement of the question, though it did not place the matter beyond all

expression of variant opinion. In the East, the question seems to have been settled only by a general consent which seems still to leave the Apocalypse with some books not included in our canon, such as the Epistle of Barnabas, as still in doubt.

The whole question of the individual books of the Canon thus appears as one not of religious faith, or scriptural authority, but as one of historical evidence, and of the judgment of the Church upon that evidence with respect to the great body of the books of the New Testament, the evidence is conclusive and the judgment unanimous. If all the books included in any catalogue which has received any considerable support were included, probably no new doctrine would be added. If all which are excluded from the most limited of these catalogues were omitted, probably no doctrine would thereby be invalidated.

On the Canon of the Old Testament it is only necessary to add that the Canon accepted by the Hebrew people has been accepted in the Christian Church, as the truth of the Old Covenant was the foundation of the New. The Jewish doctrine of Scripture was peculiar, making three graded classes of books regarded as fully canonical, and a fourth ranking as religious, but below these. Several of this fourth class are embraced in the catalogue authorised at Carthage, but have not received any unanimous assent of the Christian church.



*Summary of the Doctrine of the Word.*

The Word of God in its written form thus comes to us as the result of a process at once human and Divine. It is founded in the Revelation of God made in Jesus Christ, His Incarnate Son. He is not merely its foundation, but His life and teachings form its chief content. He is further, not only its foundation and chief matter, but He also chose the human instruments through whom it was to be developed and proclaimed to the world. These were endowed for their work by the gift of the Holy Spirit in such measure as had never before been given to men. This Spirit wrought living spiritual experience of saving grace in their own hearts, gave them enlightened understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus, gave them powers of utterance fitted for their message, and confirmed all as the work of God by miracles and signs, as well as by the spiritual power which accompanied their word. This was the Divine side. But the instruments chosen of Christ to be the Apostles or messengers of this Word were men. Their language, their modes of thinking and of expressing thought, and their fundamental limitations of thought were those of men. The Divine treasure was thus given in earthen vessels. Thus as Christ Himself appeared as man, one "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin," so this Word assumes the form of human speech and literature. It has its human growth, its

relation to contemporaneous life and history, its local and temporal colouring, its human limitations of thought, its touch of human passions and sympathies ; all indeed sanctified and ennobled for the Master's use by the Divine Spirit, but still perfectly human while gloriously Divine.

Nor was this Word separated by any hard and fast line from the spiritual life of the Church which it created, and with whose young growth itself grew to its full stature. The gift of the same Spirit was given to all, Apostles and brethren, and converts, in varying measures divided to every man, like nature's gifts, as God wills. The supernatural gift of Pentecost was like the opening of the great geological epochs, the introduction of a new and higher plane of life, to be continued to the world's end, and taking up into itself all the fulness of preceding spiritual life. But as in the entire history of God's creative work in bringing in the world's new forms of life, it began with a high tide of creative power. But this power was not a thing intruded and then as suddenly withdrawn, but an abiding spiritual life to spread over the world under the laws of human development. Apostles were followed and assisted by prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers scarcely inferior to them in the possession of the Divine gifts. Not even the first chosen twelve were to stand in solitary pre-eminence. One of them fell and went to his own place, and a new Apostle, who was witness of the Lord and of

His resurrection only in a supernatural way, arose to surpass them all in abundance of labours and richness of gifts, and power of preaching, and success in founding the Church, and fulness of written as well as spoken word.

When, therefore, the course of human development brought death as well as life, error as well as expanded truth, and it became needful that the Church should have a standard by which to judge of the various shades of teaching, and to detect the first insidious approach of disease, it could indeed refer back to the Apostolic age, and above all, to the words of our Lord Himself. Of the body of truth and of the chief written monuments coming from that age, there was no doubt. But the exact line which separated it from the less perfect forms, could only be drawn by ecclesiastical judgment, and that has never on this minor point been either perfectly clear or unanimous. But this does not in the slightest degree invalidate the gospel truth, or the Apostolic Authority, founded in Christ and His Spirit, with which it comes to us. It serves only to save us from a minute bibliolatry which has inflicted upon the teaching of the Church almost endless, though minor imperfections.

PART III  
THE DOCTRINAL CONTENTS OF THE WORD  
*DIVISION I.—OF GOD*

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CHAPTER I

OF THE ORIGIN AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF  
THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

THE foundation of every religion is laid in its conception of the supreme object of its faith and worship, *i.e.* its god. This idea is also the measure of its moral and religious influence, or in other words of its power to mould the lives, and command the permanent confidence of men. It measures also its degree of perfection, and its power of advancement with the general development of the race. The idea of God embodied in the ancient mythologies was at variance with fundamental principles of morality, was incapable of forming the foundation of a pure and perfect religious faith, or of inspiring a reverent religious affection, and involved absurdities which sooner or later must end in unbelief.

The Christian conception of God does not originate with the advent of Christ. He un-

doubtedly brought into the world in his human nature a perfect consciousness of the true idea of God, such as the world had never known before ; but this new and higher idea of God was built upon historic foundations, not only in his communication of it to his fellow-men, but in the human shaping which it took in his own thoughts, so far as we may judge from his words. He spoke as a man who had been trained to know the God of His fathers, but who in the depths of His own being beheld in that Father God a divine glory which the world had never known. This was His consciousness of Sonship and out of that consciousness He revealed the Father. This historic foundation of the Christian idea of God leads us back through the entire development of the Hebrew religion as recorded in the Old Testament. It even passes beyond this into that dim prehistoric region in which all the great elements of human life and history have their origin. The Old Testament Scriptures nowhere speak of their conception of God as a matter of prophetic, or mosaic, or patriarchal discovery, or primary revelation. To Moses God appears as the God of his fathers : Noah worshipped God before Abraham ; and before Noah, Enoch walked with God ; men began to call upon the name of the Lord in the days of Seth, but even before this Abel brought his offering and Adam, the primitive man received his commandments. But of the first introduction of this man to God there is no attempt at account, the narrative proceeds

as if he must have known Him. The Hebrew religious faith thus carries us back to the primitive idea of God given to the race as in itself an idea of the true God, and builds historically upon that basis a revelation of this true God ever advancing in adequacy and perfection.

In harmony with these facts, Paul in his mission to the Gentiles, as Christ in His personal mission to the Jews, builds upon the faith in God which he finds already there existent ; but not in its corrupted forms of individual and well-known gods, but in the form of the search for the unknown God, whose power in the world they had been forced to acknowledge, Acts xvii. 23-29 ; And he refers that faith back to the foundation of the world, and to the revelation of God in the human conscience. Rom. i. 19, 20 ; ii. 14, 15.

Both Christianity and the Old Testament thus clearly recognise the validity of a general faith in God belonging to the race, and which it is their business, not to destroy, but to purify and perfect. To this faith Paul makes his appeal among the rude inhabitants of Lystra ; and when standing before the proud and corrupt Felix, and to this same faith Peter makes his opening appeal when called to preach the gospel to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his Gentile friends. Christianity thus from the beginning placed itself in touch with the universal religious feeling of humanity, and extended to all faith in God, however feeble or blind or dark, the sympathy of a Divine charity. Would to God that its followers had



never failed to understand its true spirit and method.

Our first work is thus to enquire as to the original knowledge of God given to the race whether by nature or by revelation, for both the Old Testament and the New seem, not only to recognise such knowledge as the foundation of all religion, but also to hold men responsible for it, even amid all the darkness and perversions of heathenism; Acts x. 17; Rom. i. 20, 21; Isa. xl. 21. In many other such passages this universal idea of God is either predicated or assumed as the possession of the whole race and as the foundation of all moral and religious responsibility. Paul in Rom. x. 14, etc., especially sets it forth very explicitly. After stating the universal condition of salvation, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," he proceeds, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" . . . "But I say did they not hear? Yea verily, their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." One has only to look carefully at the argument here, as well as at the full context which we have not quoted *in extenso*, to see that Paul has before his mind, as the foundation of universal religious responsibility, and of the preaching of the Gospel itself, a knowledge of God not confined to the chosen people, not mediated through the preaching of Moses and the prophets alone, but taught by the

heavens which "declare the glory of God" "in all the earth" and "unto the ends of the inhabited world," known even among people "void of understanding" in the estimation of the Jews, and found even of those who sought not and asked not after God.

We are thus led to enquire—

1. What are the contents of this universal and fundamental conception of God?
2. Whence was it originally derived?
3. How has it been maintained as a universal faith of the race?

The primitive idea of God as appealed to in Scripture, and as found in more or less distinct form in even the most ancient religions, consists of four elements:—Power, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness or Mercy. These elements are conceived in the concrete unity of a Being who is Author of all things, hence before all, and by whose power all things exist. We do not intend by this to assert that the most ancient religious faith which we can trace among men was monotheistic in the proper sense of the term. At the best, the conception of one only living and true God was but dim and undefined. The Vedic monotheism described by Max Müller in his various works is a good illustration of this. The object of the adoration of the worshipper varies with circumstances. It is now the sun, now the sky, now the earth, now the fertilizing rain-cloud; but in each case he finds in that object the same Divine attributes, and these are

essentially those of power, wisdom, righteousness and mercy. In other cases, as in the most ancient books of China, there is a clearer recognition of the one supreme and true God. Speaking of the Shu and the Shih, Dr Legge says, "In these books many things are predicated of Heaven, Ti, and Shang Ti, that are true only of the true God. He is the ruler of men and all this lower world. Men in general, the mass of the people, are His peculiar care. He appointed grain to be the nourishment of all. He watches especially over the conduct of kings, whom He has exalted to their high position for the good of the people. While they reverence Him and fulfil their duties in His fear, and with reference to His will, taking His ways as their pattern, He maintains them, smells the sweet savour of their offerings, and blesses them and their people with abundance and general prosperity. When they become impious and negligent of their duties, He punishes them, takes away the throne from them, and appoints others in their place. His appointments come from His fore-knowledge and fore-ordination.

Of ancient Egypt Rawlinson says, "Below the popular mythology there lay concealed from general view, but open to the educated masses, a theological system which was not far removed from pure natural theology. The real essential unity of the Divine nature was taught and insisted on. The sacred texts spoke of a single Being, 'the sole producer of all things in heaven and earth, Himself not produced by any,' the only true,

living God, self-originated,' 'who exists from the beginning,' 'who has made all things, but has not Himself been made.'" . . . "He was a pure spirit, perfect in every respect, allwise, almighty, supremely, perfectly good." . . . "No educated Egyptian priest certainly, probably no educated layman, conceived of the popular gods as really separate and distinct beings."

The Assyrians and Babylonians had fallen more deeply into moral corruption, and their religious faith was correspondingly degraded. And yet even here beneath their crass and often immoral polytheism, may be seen conceptions of justice and goodness and wisdom, as well as of power, in the gods whom they worshipped. Thus in the ancient world as it lay about the Hebrew people there was to be found a religious faith which made the idea of God familiar, and the fundamental Divine attributes a matter of common thought. And these attributes were not conceived as abstract qualities of the great world or of Nature, but as attributes of a personal being to whom they stood in a personal relation, in fact as the foundation of religion. It is in the light of these facts that we must read the Old Testament and especially the parts of it which date furthest back in the history of revelation. They begin with a language accustomed to speak of God, with a definite name, with titles of worshipful respect, with words which express His attributes, with terms already in use which express all the important factors of religion such as prayer,

sacrificial offering, trust, fear, obedience, judgment against sin, etc. They imply a well-known belief in these things, and they do not sever their religious faith from that of other nations except as protesting against the abominable immoralities and empty falsities and superstitions which they had substituted for the true God. We are thus led to look for something in the history of the race or in the common nature of humanity, whereby we can account for this ancient and historic belief in God.

Before appealing to ancient history for facts in answer to this question, we may clear the way by looking at the general facts of our own time. In fact we can only interpret the past by the present, as the geologist finds around him to-day the dynamic agencies which account for the facts found in the ancient strata. The world's faith in God to-day and our existing conceptions of God arise in three ways :—

1. From traditional teachings.
2. From personal experience of religious faith called out by the facts of our lives.
3. From processes of reasoning.

The first of these implies that the knowledge of God already exists among men. The same is we believe true of the third, for, as Mr Watson has shewn, no people have ever developed a philosophy who were not already in possession of a religion. The revelation of God therefore, either through the experiences of human life or by some entirely supernatural method, must lie

back of traditional teaching or philosophic speculation. Even if we account for the communication of the first idea of God to men by supernatural agencies, yet, if it were to be to succeeding generations anything more than a traditional form of words, men in each successive age must have for themselves known the God of their fathers by personal experience in His service; they must have proved His attributes and verified the traditional promises. Only thus would religious faith maintain its life and power. If this personal living relation to God declined, it is easy to understand how the idea would become obscured and corrupted. If it was maintained by faithful service of God, it is equally obvious that it would be as a "shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day."

Exactly in harmony with these data from our present living experience are the oldest records or traditions of the knowledge of God among the Hebrew people. Like all ancient traditions many of them are fragmentary and exceedingly difficult of literal and historical interpretation; but the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has not hesitated to interpret their uniform spiritual significance as a living personal faith by which the knowledge of God was maintained and increased from generation to generation. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, knew God by a living personal faith. Whatever were the objective facts of their lives by which they were brought into communion with God, it was by inward and



spiritual apprehension, by trust, love, reverence, and a spirit of obedience in their hearts that they knew God, and out of this religious feeling their conception of God was perfected.

For our purposes of Christian theology it is not necessary to follow the evolution and gradual perfecting of the conception of God through the Old Testament. It is sufficient to know that in its origin, in its maintenance, and in its gradual perfection, it has been from the beginning a living faith, a spiritual and not a merely intellectual faith; and that this spiritual idea was God-given to the race from the beginning. Even the teleological and the cosmological arguments are religious rather than philosophical as presented in the book of Job, in the Psalms and in Isaiah, and still more so the moral argument in which God's presence is enforced by His judgments, and by the voice of conscience in man.

Religious faith differs essentially from philosophy in its method of approaching the idea of God. It is a feeling awakened by the attributes, a sense of power, of wisdom, of righteous judgment, of goodness and mercy. And these attributes imply in their very nature and in the necessities of thought a being capable of sustaining them. On the other hand, philosophy from effect first predicates a cause and then from the nature of the effect infers the nature of the cause. Philosophy first recognises fact, existence as a matter of Knowledge and infers Cause and thence its attributes. Religion feels the presence of the

attributes, and in them directly perceives the being. But each finds God in the exercise of His power (the cosmological argument), in His wisdom (the teleological argument), or in His justice and goodness in His providences (the moral argument). Even the historical argument has its analogue in religious faith, for religious faith propagates itself by the power of sympathy ; and the sympathy of men in religious faith is far more influential in producing living faith than the mere argument, that because men universally so believe, it must be true. Again the ontological argument in philosophy has also its counterpart in religious faith. This argument is supposed to be founded in the necessary laws of thought. It leads us to what cannot but be, to *that which must be* in the very nature of things. To this rational necessity in philosophy corresponds a moral necessity in ethics, the moral capacity leads us to *that which ought to be*. And so the religious nature leads us to the final good, that which is good (perfectly good), to be. And these three necessities, with a fourth of the beautiful, are in the deepest conviction of our nature one. We see at once that the beautiful and the good are not only fitting to be and good to be but that they ought to be ; and our deepest conviction tells us that in some way, at some time, and in some place or sphere of being they must be. Possibly Anselm's argument was quite as much this instinct of his religious nature as the product of pure reason.

From our standpoint of theological study, we thus pass over the usual philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Historically, God has from the beginning revealed Himself to the religious faith of men. They have discerned His presence through His attributes in His works, just as sense discerns the presence of matter through its attributes, colour, form, taste, smell, etc. Philosophy can confirm this faith, and sometimes assist to purify it from superstitions, which are not a real religious faith but an imitation. True religious faith as we have seen is thoroughly rational. Superstition is always immoral, irreligious, or absurd, and often all these at the same time. But while reason and conscience may assist, our foundation for theology must be laid in religious faith, and this first of all apprehends God in His Attributes, His power, His justice, His wisdom, His goodness. To these we must now direct our attention.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

THE attributes of God are manifested to our religious faith—

1. In God's works of nature including our own spiritual being.

2. In God's providence which in its widest sense is His control of His works in their relation to Himself and to each other.

All this implies a God who stands not alone in an abstract perfection, and incomprehensible isolation, but in continuous relation to the things which He has made. These things have all thus their Godward side, and on this side they reflect some image of their author, they all spring from something in Him. This is the teaching at once of faith and reason ; reason infers this, faith feels it. The bright light, the warm sunshine, the balmy breeze, each bring with them an impress of a goodness from which they come as themselves "good and perfect gifts." The learning of God through this varied impress of Himself upon His works, is a lesson of almost boundless amplitude. But it is one which has been so fully taught in the living Word which in the various ages God has sent to men, that it is not difficult

to collect and classify its leading elements as the fundamental attributes of God. Of each of these there is almost endless variety of aspect, and the vocabulary of religion has grown peculiarly rich in terms to express the varied manifestations of God's goodness, or wisdom, or holiness or love. To treat these as distinct attributes would only lead to confusion. We must seek such an enumeration as will be at once fairly comprehensive, and will give us clear lines of distinction, and thus afford a basis for both definitions and classification. It must not be forgotten that in God all attributes unite in the perfect unity of His being and work. The attributes all qualify each other. That which in Him is true is holy, and that which is holy is good. The distinctions are not so much in Him as in us. To His perfect intelligence perhaps the true nature of every attribute springs from one central glorious perfection of being. But we apprehend them according to our limited measure, one by one, as they appeal to and find in us reflections of the Divine image. We may thus look within for the lines along which to distinguish and define and classify the individual attributes; and at the same time we may collect them inductively from the word, inasmuch as this word as we have seen has also taken its form from our finite humanity.

Possibly the following enumeration without professing to be perfect may serve our purpose.

1. Attributes in which God stands related to all being—Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence.

2. Attributes in which He puts forth all activity, Goodness, Wisdom, Freedom.

3. The fundamental Moral Attributes ; Truth, Holiness, Love.

It may be objected that the order here adopted is that of a philosophical scheme rather than of religious development. This is true, but seems unavoidable if we would secure distinctness of definition. The very object of Theology is to bring the implicit contents of religious faith into the form of clearly defined thought, so that they may be apprehended intellectually as well as religiously. This places it between faith on the one hand and science or philosophy on the other. If its true content must always come from faith, its form may often be suggested from science or philosophy or from the logical methods common to both.

### *Omnipresence.*

Presence is the term by which we express personal relation to finite space and all that it contains. The presence of a finite person is limited to a finite space. So is the extension of a finite body of any kind. But presence and extension in space are two very different conceptions. Presence is a spiritual thing, and in its most complete sense it is possible only between two or more spiritual beings. We do not speak of being present to inanimate things, and only in a tropical sense of being present to the lower animals. We are present to our friends, and in this, that or the



other place only as the possible locality of spiritual activity. Apart from spiritual activity we merely are there as a stone might be. This spirituality of presence is an essential element in our religious apprehension of the presence of God. Men first learn to say, "Lo God is in this place" in connection with His manifested presence. When we say then that God is everywhere present, we signify that in all the plenitude of His power, and in all the qualities of His being, He is in every place in such a way that it may be at once the place of the exercise of His power, His goodness, His wisdom, in fact all His attributes. This attribute is thus the foundation of all the Divine relations and of the exercise of all the Divine attributes, and thus constitutes the fundamental attribute.

The scriptural presentation of the presence of God is thoroughly religious; it is always a presence to the religious consciousness and affections. This is expressed—

1. As the universal presence of God to all His creatures in intimate relation to them. Probably this was never more perfectly, religiously and beautifully expressed than in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. Beginning with the omniscience of God, of which he is intensely and painfully conscious, and passing on to His power and His wisdom in fashioning man as the creature of His goodness, at the beginning he says, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" and at the end he exclaims, "When I am awake I am still with thee."

An equally religious but terrible expression of the omnipresence of God in judgment is found in Amos ix. 2, and following verses, "Though they dig into hell thence shall my hand take them; though they climb up into heaven thence will I bring them down."

2. Over against this universal, active and energetic presence of God, knowing all and doing all, whether in mercy or in judgment, we have the universal dependence of all upon an ever present God. A notable expression of this, almost purely philosophical in its form and yet thoroughly religious in its spirit, we have in Paul's discourse at Athens (Acts xvii. 27-28). "He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." So in Col. i. 17 he says, "In Him all things consist"; and so the writer to the Hebrews says, "Upholding all things by the word of his power" (ch. i. 3).

3. Finally this attribute receives an almost abstract expression in Paul's phrase "filling all things," used in Eph. iv. 10, and i. 23. Possibly the expression of Jeremiah xxiii. 24, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" has not the same meaning, though still an expression of the Divine Omnipresence; and certainly Ps. lxxii. 19 brings us back to the religious, praying that the whole earth may be the conscious theatre of His glory. And what is here a prayer becomes in Isa. vi. 3 the triumphant vision of religious faith, "The whole earth is full of His glory."

*Omniscience.*

Next to the Divine presence, the attributes of power and wisdom are perhaps the first to be recognised by religious faith. Power is seen in work, and of this work wisdom is the guiding intelligence. Almost simultaneous with this recognition of intelligence in God's works, is the recognition which arises in conscience under the guidance of religious faith. Out of these two arises that broad outlook of religious faith over the whole universe and the whole course of human history which gives such strength and confidence to the religious spirit. A conspicuous example of this we have in Acts xv. 18, when James, after appealing to the voice of the Spirit in olden time declaring the incoming of the Gentiles, draws from it this striking generalization ; "known from the beginning of the world." The moral side is especially emphasized in Heb. iv. 13, "and there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight : but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

The Old Testament abounds in declarations of the all inclusive knowledge of God, both from the natural and the moral side ; *e.g.* Job xxviii. 24, "For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven" ; Prov. xv. 3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" ; 1 Sam. ii. 3, "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" ; Job xxi. 22, "Shall any teach

God knowledge? seeing it is He that judgeth those that are high." Ps. cxlvii. 5 ; Isa. xl. 28. The recognition of this attribute is implied in all religious faith and worship ; and its distinctly conscious apprehension is the basis of all the highest forms of faith. The danger of doubt here was early recognised especially on the moral side. In Job. xxii. 13, it is presented as a dangerous sin to say, "What doth God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness? Thick clouds are a covering to Him, that He seeth not, and He walketh in the circuit of heaven." Even then this was recognised as an "old way which wicked men have trodden" ; and appears to correspond with the modern idea of a universal power in nature without personal conscious intelligence. The question in its moral bearing and its ancient answer are both given in Ps. xciv. 7-11 : "They say the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob consider. Consider ye brutish among the people, and ye fools when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that chastiseth the nations, shall not He correct? Even He that teacheth man knowledge. The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men that they are vanity." Here the faith that speaks out of conscience, asserting the universal intelligent presence of God is confirmed by an appeal to reason. Intelligence in man implies intelligence in the Creator. From this direct doubt which arises from a lack of spiritual insight,

which the psalmist more than once designates by the term foolish, we may turn to two modern difficulties of a philosophical character.

1. Can the self-existent, the independent God be dependent on the creature for the exercise of an attribute of His being? How can God know without something beyond Himself to be known? This is an objection which lies against all the attributes which relate God to His creatures. We can scarcely conceive of them as eternal capacities awaiting the birth of time, or as infinite potentialities never even yet fully exercised. So far as this particular attribute is concerned one might find an answer from philosophy itself in the idealism of Plato. Of this the beautifully religious and philosophical poetry of Proverbs viii. 22-31 seems almost an anticipation. But a fully developed Christian faith gives us the complete answer in John i. 1 expanded in John xvii. 5 and 24, ending with "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Lest this should be ascribed to the mysticism of St John, we have it in another form in Matt. xi. 27, "No man knoweth the Son save the Father, neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." We find here, as in many other questions, in the doctrine of the Trinity, the truth most peculiarly unveiled by religious faith, the key to the greatest difficulties of religious philosophy.

2. Another difficulty arises from the relation of God's knowledge to that contingency which is implied in free will. Here the intuition of the



moral consciousness, This is my act, I alone did it, I might have done otherwise, and I am responsible for not so doing, is opposed to the intuition of the religious consciousness, God knows this act, and He knew it before I did it. First let us note that the two intuitions when stated as above in simple terms, and not in forms borrowed from philosophy, are not directly contradictory. It can only be said that they seem to imply a contradiction. Until we understand more fully the relation of God's entire being including His knowledge to the sequences of time, we cannot certainly know whether such contradiction really exists. Both religious faith and moral conviction might therefore very safely permit this question to stand among the many mysteries to which our imperfect knowledge has not yet attained. In the meantime we must not quarrel with, or despise the legitimate ambition of philosophy to find an answer to her own difficulty. The doctrine of an "eternal now" combined with the intuitive character of all Divine knowledge represents one of these efforts. The distinction of all the objects of Divine knowledge as necessary, free, and potential represents another effort at solution. A third proposes to limit the religious intuition by saying that God does not will to know our free acts, that He voluntarily leaves them outside His knowledge that they may be free. While this may satisfy the moral intuition, it certainly does not answer the philosophical question, which is not concerning the actuality, but concerning the possibility of such



knowledge, and it at the same time contradicts the religious faith which especially extends the Divine knowledge to these moral acts. In the present state of the question it would be a very great mistake to pin our religious faith to any one of these speculations or link them in with our theology. They however serve to shew us the true bearing of the question, and to convince us that it presents no insuperable difficulty to either the moral or the religious convictions which are supposed to be incompatible.

*Omnipotence.*

The idea expressed by the words power, efficiency and cause, is one of the most fundamental of our conceptions. It arises within us by a necessity of our thought, perhaps in connection with the conscious exertion of will, and the sense of its freedom. In general the idea arises wherever in the physical world we see motion, and in the wider field wherever we see results which experience teaches us to associate with movement or with will, including purpose.

This attribute is probably the very first which the human mind in its exercise of religious faith associates with the presence of God ; it is that by which the presence of God first becomes manifest.

The first form under which this attribute is grasped by our religious faith is the ascription to God of all existent power and efficiency. This is set forth in Scripture in the most direct

and simple words, "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made," John i. 3; "Upholding all things by the word of His power," Heb. i. 3. "In Him all things consist," Col. i. 16. "In Him we live, move, and have our being," Acts xvii. 28. "Who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will," Eph. i. 11.

From this faith easily rises to the conception of an inexhaustible fountain of power. As experience finds no limit to the exercise of Divine power in fact, so faith cannot consent to limit its possibility. The Scriptures express this also in simple and direct language as Jer. xxxii. 17, "Behold Thou has made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and by Thy stretched out arm; there is nothing too hard for Thee." So the faith of Abraham is stimulated by the question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Gen. xviii. 14.

It is scarcely needful to add that this idea of infinite power is extended to moral and spiritual efficiency as well as to that which is physical (Eph. i. 19, etc.).

It is a most essential part of this religious faith, that this power is exercised as a personal will, and not as a force acting under a law of necessity. When the Psalmist says, "Our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He pleased" (Ps. cxv. 3, cxxxv. 6), he does not merely use an anthropomorphic form. The personal idea is an essential element of the

religious faith. A truly religious sentiment (which includes confidence and love), towards a blind force is a spiritual impossibility. Hence the full religious expression in such a passage as Rev. iv. 11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the honour and the glory and the power, for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created."

The questions, Can the power of God effect absurdities, or contradictions, or moral evil, are such as religious faith can never consider. To apply these to God would be to the devout spirit blasphemy.

#### *Goodness.*

The three attributes already considered form the foundation for those which follow and which contemplate God in His Divine activity,—goodness impels, wisdom guides, freedom acts.

Faith in God as good is one of the most obvious elements of all religions. The Saxon God, *i.e.* Good, is a witness to this. Man has an inherent faith in supreme goodness; the loss of this faith is the worst form of insanity. Yet experience teaches us that no attribute of God requires to be more accurately conceived and carefully defined to faith as well as to knowledge than this. In broad terms goodness may be defined as the fountain which produces well-being. But well-being is a relative and progressive thing. It begins with the lowest forms of material life, and rises through numberless

planes of being to the highest perfection of moral nature and of communion with God. True well-being thus varies with the nature of the being concerned. To a creature who has fallen below his privilege of being, there is ever present the danger of an interpretation of the goodness of God, fatal to his higher interests. For man in his faith in God to sink to the level of the brute would be deadly sin. These things he is exhorted to intrust to the universal care of God; his struggle is to be toward higher things. "Seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The far-reaching view opened up to us in modern science, in which all nature from its lowest to its highest forms, stands before us in an almost eternal and inexorable struggle from the lower to the higher plane, should itself cause us to approach this subject with the most serious consideration.—

This attribute as presented to religious faith in the Scripture—

1. Sets God forth as the author of all well-being.

2. It represents this as proceeding from an inherent motive, a spring of benevolence as well as of beneficence in His being.

To both these ideas of the Divine goodness the inspired scriptures give most ample expression. In the Old Testament the opening document in Genesis pictures the work of Creation as the pleasure of God in His work as good, and as

practically devising that which is good for man. In the heart of the Mosaic revelation, we have embodied a remarkable declaration of the Divine goodness in Ex. xxxiv. 6 : "The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." As is quite natural in a book of hymns of religious worship, the psalms are full of the praises of the Divine goodness. The theme and refrain of more than one entire psalm is contained in the words, "O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever." Of another the refrain is, "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" Another declares that "the earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord"; and this tone throughout is so characteristic as to make the religion of the Old Testament emphatically a religion of light and gladness, not in a low sensuous form, but as arising out of a calm, strong, and joyous faith in a God who is supremely good. The ministry of the Hebrew prophets was pre-eminently a ministry of correction of sin, and of support of God's people in the conflict and sorrow of life ; but it never lost sight of this supreme faith as a ground of inspiration to better things, of consolation in trouble, as well as of joyous confidence under all circumstances in life. A single passage of remarkable poetic beauty from Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, may

serve as an example. "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together unto the goodness of the Lord, to the corn, and to the wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd ; and their soul shall be as a watered garden ; and they shall not sorrow any more at all " (Jer. xxxi. 12).

We cannot omit two others.

"How great is goodness ! and how great is his beauty !  
Corn shall make the young men flourish  
And new wine the maids."  
ZECH. ix. 17.

"For though the fig tree shall not blossom,  
Neither shall fruit be in the vines,  
The labour of the olive shall fail  
And the fields shall yield no meat ;  
The flock shall be cut off from the fold  
And there shall be no herd in the stalls ;  
Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,  
I will joy in the God of my salvation.  
Jehovah my God is my strength,  
And He will make my feet like hinds' feet.  
He will make me to walk upon my high places."  
HAB. iii. 17-19.

Even the light and merry optimism of the Greeks in their palmiest days was not more buoyant than this religious faith. But no exposition of the goodness of God is more complete than that given by our Lord Himself. His conception of the goodness of God was such that in comparison none other could be called good ; Matt. xix. 17. This conception was embodied in the designation which He never failed to employ,



"Our Father." It made all prayer easy and confident. And it rose pre-eminent above both the merits and even the sins of men; Matt. v. 45; vii. 11. The Lord's ideas are reflected in Jas. i. 17: "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning."

The mistakes of an imperfect religious faith in the goodness of God arise not so much from an overestimate of this attribute, as from severing it from the full unity of the Divine attributes. A goodness which is not in harmony with the truth of things, with the right, and with the wisdom which chooses the best ends and seeks them by the best means, is not a true goodness. It is evil, not good. And yet such is the goodness which we in our blindness and sinfulness too often seek, and which we would even dare to expect from God. It is needless to say that such religious faith has failed to find the truth.

Out of our study of this attribute as revealed to religious faith, there naturally arises the question, Does this faith demand an optimism? There can be no doubt that the spirit of optimism is closely allied to that of religion, and that pessimism lies at the furthest remove from Christianity. Even the ancient myth-forming spirit indulged in optimistic dreams, such as the golden age, and the garden of Hesperides.

If we construe optimism to mean the sum-total

of all good, then it is certain that this has not been given to a finite creature, nor in a finite world. In fact the gift of all good by creative act would be the production not of a finite creature but of the counterpart of God Himself which is an impossibility, as there cannot be two infinite beings although there may be two infinite persons, one in essence. Nor does the true religious spirit in the creature demand such an optimism. It asks, it seeks, it aspires to ever higher good, but ever according to its measure, according to that which it "can ask and think." To express it in the terms of our latest philosophy, it is ever aspiring towards its ideal, but the ideal itself grows with its moral and spiritual growth.

The true optimism guided by the humble and thankful yet aspiring religious spirit demands—

1. That all God's work should be, in its measure and after its kind, good.

2. That throughout its entire scale of being there should be an open highway ascending to the more perfect good. Probably in this way alone can the most complete, and the highest universal order be constituted. This is the central and universal principle of which we have a special application in Rom. viii. 28. It brings the creature nearer to the creator, by giving it, not passive reception of good, but active effort toward good, thus imparting to it even in its lowest forms something akin to creative energy in itself. In the moral creature it rises to a true Divine image and likeness. It is needless to say how completely

our highest modern science asserts such an optimism.

The problem of evil is another very ancient question which arises in connection with the study of this attribute. The presence of evil in the world, and still more the suffering of evil in personal experience has in every age been a sore trial to religious faith, as well as a difficult problem to religious thought. The ancient philosophies all fall back upon—

1. An eternal principle of evil, an evil being or beings standing opposed to the good ; or,

2. The ascription of evil to the influence of matter which is also regarded as eternal. It is evident that this is not a solution of the question ; it merely pushes it back into the obscurity of the past. Its inconsistency with the highest religious faith is also apparent from the resort of the Magian philosophy, which was highly religious, to the teaching that this evil would be finally overcome. With the Christian faith they are absolutely inconsistent, inasmuch as they both limit God, the one by dividing the creative power with an antagonistic force of evil, the other by making him dependent upon co-existent material.

Instead of these the true religious spirit finds the solution in the voice of conscience. Evil is the result of sin ; and this intuition of religious conscience is the consistent and uniform teaching of Scripture. It affirms as existent facts—

1. The sin of higher moral intelligences.

2. Through their temptation the sin of man.

These facts, their verity, and their results will be considered in full hereafter. It is here sufficient to say that they constitute the real evil of the universe.

On the other hand the problem of pain is somewhat different. A superficial view has long been disposed to make pain always the result of sin. That it is frequently so is doubtless true, and is abundantly recognised in Scripture. But we doubt whether Scripture teaches that it is universally so, or even that apart from sin, pain would not have existed. The friends of Job insisted on connecting his suffering with sin, but his conscience and his faith both protested against their cruel theory. He himself fell back upon the mysterious order of God whose working and reasons are so far beyond our comprehension, but not without glimpses of a faith which found even in pain a higher good. This latter point the New Testament emphatically asserts, and it is especially prominent in the teaching of St Paul ; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. The highest triumph of religious faith is this joy in tribulations. Rom. v. 3 ; Heb. xii. 11.

### *Wisdom.*

This attribute contemplates God in relation to action, and it combines His omniscience with His goodness and the moral attributes yet to be considered, in choosing the ends of Divine action and the best means for the accomplishment of those ends. Wisdom thus expresses the entire relation of God to action, including perfect motive,

perfect choice, and perfect means and method of work. It includes both the intellectual and the moral side of action. The Hebrew mind viewed it largely from the moral side ; the modern tendency is to view it too largely from the intellectual side. The perfection of the Divine attribute includes both, and is at once the strength of the universe and the salvation of man. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works ! in wisdom hast Thou made them all : the earth is full of Thy riches," Ps. civ. 24.

The general scriptural presentation of the wisdom of God arises from the devout contemplation of His works in creation, providence, and redemption. The hundred and fourth Psalm from which we have just quoted is a conspicuous example of the first, as are also the discourses in Proverbs iii. and viii., and many passages in Job.

The New Testament as is natural deals more largely with the wisdom of God in the work of redemption. St Paul is the great expositor of this theme. To his mind Christ is "the wisdom of God" ; and in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3 ; and the unfolding of this wisdom in all its varied fulness in the history of the Church, is matter for the contemplation not of men alone, but of "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," Eph. iii. 10. And after through three chapters he has traced one aspect of this wisdom along the course of the dispensations, he closes with this note of admiring faith, "O the depth of the

riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God."

But the point of view in which the writers of Scripture seem especially to delight is that of considering all true wisdom of men as the gift of God. In the Hebrew ideal this gift ranked highest of all endowments. Physical strength, agility and beauty, courage, eloquence, and poetic and artistic skill were all appreciated as among other ancient people. But "wisdom is the principal thing," "her price is above rubies," and "all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her." Their language was exceedingly rich in terms to express this gift. No less than seven words express various shades of the idea from technical skill to the profound discernment of moral intuition, and from subtle craft, to the quiet strength of calm calculation. But all this variety of highest power in man, the power to choose and attain to ends is bestowed by God. And His wisdom infinitely transcends the human capacity. Against the unerring perfection of His methods of work no human device avails; and the only true human wisdom is that which recognises, acknowledges and fears God and keeps His commandments, in other words, works under and in harmony with him. No literature, not even our modern natural theology has carried this conception of Divine wisdom to a higher point than is thus given in Job xxviii. 12, etc.; xxxvi. 5; xxxviii. 37, 38; Ps. civ. 24, Prov. viii. 22, etc.; Rom. xi. 33; Eph. i. 8; iii. 10. In all



these passages the Divine spirit in man leads to the highest conception of God, and there is no exhibition of Divine skill more wonderful than that which "puts wisdom in our inward parts."

*Freedom.*

Freedom is an ultimate element in our conscious spiritual activity. It cannot be analysed or defined. This consciousness arises in connection with our voluntary acts with more or less distinctness, and in its turn lays the foundation for our sense of responsibility. We can thus only describe the conditions under which it arises, and refer each individual to his own experience of its presence in himself.

1. It arises only in the exercise of will and hence is characteristic of will.

2. It is most distinctly present when we are most deliberate and self-conscious in action, when motive, purpose, and choice are most distinctly in exercise. It is less fully present when our action partakes of the nature of instinctive impulse, and entirely absent in automatic or reflexive action, such as the closing of the eye in the presence of a blow. It is also absent from acts performed under the compulsion of physical force, if such can be called acts, as distinct from mere motions. Even the application of motives against which we are consciously without power, interferes with the sense of freedom. Hence we are astonished at the moral strength which enables a man to endure torture, and for acts performed under its com-

pulsion we do not hold him responsible beyond human power to endure.

3. The self-consciousness which gives us the clearest sense of freedom is that which includes motives distinctly apprehended ; a free act always implies a motive.

4. It implies further the exercise of either rational or moral judgment upon motive ; or in most cases both. These judgments in their turn become a new motive purely spiritual, *i.e.* directing us from within in distinction from desire which draws us to something without ourselves. The act in the presence of this higher motive, this direction of will by our own higher nature, arises to the dignity of a free act, and becomes a simple determination for or against the higher motive. In its ultimate analysis this sense of freedom can only arise in the presence of the higher rational and moral nature ; and it implies not only obligation, *i.e.* the motive force of the higher nature, but also power to determine action, to do or not to do, as reason and conscience direct. The act is thus not a mere resultant of motive forces from without or within, but is essentially our own act performed by our own power of will. It is here distinctly that our consciousness of freedom appears.

5. This act of determination finites the act, *i.e.* defines or determines it, as to time, place, quality, and degree ; in other words, it fixes the when, the where, the what, and the how great of the act. It is this peculiarity which dis-

tinguishes will from all necessitated action. Necessitated action is determined by cause in all these particulars; and in the cause there is no power to define, it simply transmits the force of which it is the bearer. It cannot but be when, where, and what it is. Voluntary action can be or not be, can be what it chooses within the limits of its power. In the act thus produced there is a sense of origination, of selfhood asserted, and at least to some extent of independent action or beginning, which is nearly allied to the idea of creation. In this consciousness of freedom we have our nearest experience of an absolute beginning. Freedom is thus the expression of our deepest selfhood, the centre of responsibility and personality, the exercise of all our powers of reason, emotion, moral nature and will. It is the perfect man in action. It makes our act our own. But in our case it implies something objective to our personality as well; an occasion furnishing a motive to action. But the essence of freedom lies not in the presence of this not me. That is the badge of our finiteness. If that alone were present, our act would not be free. Freedom asserts itself to govern, and if need be to overcome this. It springs out of the reason and moral nature of the living spirit, and the not me is but the occasion needed by a finite and dependent spirit.

Having thus endeavoured to clear our conception of freedom, the question arises, Can we attribute this quality of freedom to God either

as existing from all eternity or as acting in time? Our answer to this question must be first of all from the religious consciousness especially as expressed in Scripture. We may then consider the reasonableness of such a faith.

1. There can be no doubt that the religious consciousness of humanity in all the ages has recognised God, not as a mere necessary force or power in the universe, but as a free personality. This is involved in all the important active relations of God to the world. It had a beginning, He determined that beginning. It has its course of history, He governs and guides that course. The same thing is implied in all the religious relations of humanity to God. We fear, reverence, trust, pray to, love, obey, not a blind force, but a personal God.

2. The Old Testament Scriptures open with the sublime conception of creation. This work certainly implies all the results or characteristics of a free act. It is not simply the going forth of infinite or of finite energy to effect a result; it is power willing, and so beginning to act (*a*) at a definite time, (*b*) in a definite place, (*c*) to a defined and limited result. All the terms in which this is set forth, both in Gen. i. and Ps. civ., as well as elsewhere, are such as apply only to a free act. In the same way the Scriptures set forth the providence of God in a way that implies pre-eminently the action of a free personality, and not the effect of mere force. Motives, intelligence, moral judgment, as well as absolute

authority are all ascribed to Him, and the final faith of His people is expressed thus, "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." Compare Ps. x. 12-18; xxii. 28, etc; Isa. xl. 12, etc. But for the highest conception of this attribute, we must again turn to the New Testament in such passages as Rom. ix.-xi. and Eph. i., where the good pleasure of the wise, holy, and loving God guides the course of all worlds, all ages, and all dispensations.

Not the sovereignty of God merely, but the freedom which is a more comprehensive and adequate term is thus a fundamental part of religious faith.

Before we can grasp the reasonableness of this faith it will be necessary as far as possible to discover in what respects God's freedom differs from ours. To do this we must anticipate for a moment a perfection of the Divine being yet to be considered, the self-sufficiency of God. To all our actions as finite beings a not me, some external object is necessary. God as self-sufficient can create His own object of action. No element of religious faith is more prominent than this. The whole religious heart of humanity asserts that to help with or without means is all the same to God. We have indeed abused this faith by calling in creative or miraculous power where God proceeds according to the law which He has already ordained for His works. But while religious faith in its imperfection may have needlessly invoked this principle, all philosophy and all science

must recognise its presence, if ever it is to reach a world existing in time.

This self-sufficiency renders the freedom of God truly perfect freedom. The truth by which a free act is directed, the right by which it is governed, the power by which it is effected, and the end to which it is directed, are all in and of Himself. "All things have been created through Him and unto Him," Col. i. 16. The Divine freedom is thus an absolute freedom, His acts alone being in the most complete sense in and from Himself.

Again God's freedom is a perfect freedom, inasmuch as all the conditions of freedom are in Him perfect. His knowledge is perfect truth, His moral judgments are the perfect right, His power is almighty, and His goodness and wisdom are alike perfect. There is no darkness in Him and no weakness, and no changing uncertainty of will. We with our blind hesitating, tempted wills cannot conceive of the perfect will into which all perfections of being enter in a perfect harmony and unity of action.

It is sometimes said that God acts out of the necessity of His own being. To us this expression seems to involve either an error or a misuse of terms. If it implies that the Divine activity proceeds without an act of will, then the idea lands us in an eternal Pantheistic evolution. The Universe is infinite as God and eternal as God, and creation and time and beginning are all misnomers. If, on the other hand, the expression



signifies that God cannot be other than He is holy and wise and good, etc., then it is a misuse of terms for necessity applies to act or movement not to being and attribute. It is the very essence of freedom that the being out of its own attributes or powers should govern the act.

It would thus appear that there is nothing unreasonable in the ascription of freedom to God. In fact to Him alone can it be applied in the most perfect and absolute sense.

*The Moral Attributes of God.*

The attributes by which God is related to His moral creatures may be stated as truth, holiness, and love. As these terms represent the highest things in man, so they represent the supreme relation of God to His creatures. They are thus applied to God as predicates in the language of Scripture after a manner distinct. The attributes of truth and right are united under the figurative term "light," which is a favourite term of St John to denote the principles of truth and right as guiding human life. And these he speaks of, not simply as coming from God, but as expressing His very character; "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," 1 John i. 5. A little further on he uses the same form in regard to the third attribute, "God is love," 1 John iv. 8, etc. These attributes are thus declared to be of the very essence as it were of God. It is never said, God is goodness, or intelligence, or power. All these belong to Him as a spirit; but the infinite

fountain of being in Him lies deeper; He is light, the light of truth and right, and He is love. These united attributes must therefore form the very centre of our conception of God. Like freedom they are intimately related to the Divine personality, and will prepare us for its consideration.

### *Truth.*

Truth, first of all, expresses the perfect quality of the ideas formed in our minds in the exercise of intelligence; it denotes the correspondence of the idea to reality. Truth is the proper content of perfect knowledge. In this sense truth is capable of being considered as objective to the knowing mind, we contemplate it as something set over against ourselves who know it. But from this primary meaning arises a second and purely subjective application of the term to designate an essential moral quality of the knowing mind itself, the moral aspect of intelligence. This moral quality in ourselves is first of all a feeling or sense of certainty, assurance, confidence, strength in the knowledge of the truth. It is, in the second place, the joy or pleasure of this certainty, satisfaction in the truth. In the third place it is desire for the truth; and finally, it is loyal fidelity to truth which makes all truth a matter of moral obligation. It leads us to maintain the truth, to confess the truth, to present the truth, and with self-sacrificing toil and sincere honesty to seek the truth. This is the truth in

man, and represents our proper relation as spiritual beings to ideal truth. It is that quality of our being which is satisfied with, delights in and desires objective truth, and which abhors and turns from all falsity, and seeks to avoid all error. It is clearly to be distinguished from fidelity to promise ; but is practically expressed in obligation to speak the truth, both as to outward things and the thoughts and intents of our own hearts.

Truth, both from the objective and the subjective side, thus becomes the very foundation of all knowledge, and hence the very foundation of all spiritual life. If our knowing is mere subjective seeming, sham, dreaming, then all life is a falsity, and hollow and empty. It is not wonderful therefore that at the very foundation of all religious faith, lies this sacred confidence, God is a God of truth. This foundation alone constitutes the strength of our life, and makes it soul-satisfying. We have already seen that the distinction between religious faith and superstition lies in this, that the first is founded in truth, fact, reality ; the other on error or falsehood. As all religious faith takes hold of God, God must therefore be a true God, and in Himself the truth, and a God of truth ; not merely one who really exists, but one who exists in true Godhead, and one whose every thought is the *eidos*, the perfect prototype of reality, one who rejoices in all truth, and one who cannot lie. In such a God alone can all things consist.

These relations of truth in God to His creatures and to their faith in Him are abundantly presented in Scripture. It stands with the justice and goodness of God as the firm foundation of religious faith: Ex. xxxiv. 6; Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. lxxxvi. 15. It is everlasting, Ps. c. 5; cxvii. 2; cxlvi. 6. It marks all God's ways, Ps. xxv. 5; and His judgments, xcvi. 13; Isa. xlii. 3; and His law, cxix. 142; and God's eyes are upon the truth which He loves, Jer. v. 3.

The New Testament, if possible, carries this ideal still higher. God is a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. Christ is Himself the truth, John xiv. 6; and is the witness of the truth, John xviii. 37; and reveals the truth, John i. 14-17; and this truth is the supreme concern of man, John viii. 32; 1 Tim. ii. 4.

This attribute of God brings us into the region of purely spiritual and religious life as distinguished from the physical and natural. The conception of God derived from nature, includes power, skill, and beneficent provisions, and finds in God the counterpart of these things. But as we have seen these do not bring us into touch with the deepest nature of God. In fact, if our faith penetrates no further; if it does not rise to the moral and spiritual, the God whom we thus worship may be but that which the Hebrews called "Elilim," "no gods." To worship God as God we must "worship Him in spirit and in truth," and in the beauty of holiness.

This attribute in God makes fidelity to all truth one of the most essential of the religious virtues. It demands of the religious soul not only the utmost fidelity in maintaining, but the most perfect candour in receiving the truth. This is the meaning of those significant words of the Master, "Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice."

When we predicate truth as an attribute of God, we first of all affirm that God as the Author of all Being, *i.e.* of all reality, is Himself the fountain-head of all truth. The truth as it exists in all the universe is but the reflection of the truth as from eternity it exists in Him. It is sometimes asked, Is right right because God hath so ordered or determined it? or, Is there an eternal right? So it may be asked, Is there eternal Truth? Is Truth fixed by necessity? Or is Truth determined by an act of Divine will? The answer to this is that God, and Right, and Truth are one. In Scripture words, "God is light," the light of eternal right and truth. All truth is in Him, and cannot even in our thought be separated from Him. While God is God, truth will be truth. And while truth is truth, God will be God. God is truth. In all truth there is something of God. And this truth in God is a foremost element of that personality out of which God acts in the exercise of His freedom. The link which binds the truth of finite things to eternal truth in God, is not one of necessary evolution, but of personal will. And thus all finite exhibition of truth takes its finite form from

the will of God. But to religious faith even these finite forms are sacred as the embodiment of the eternal, the immutable, and the Divine. Religious faith thus finds in the truth of God the ground for that universal confidence in the steadfastness and strength of God's world, and in the reality of all things phenomenal, which gives foundation to our whole spiritual life.

*Holiness.*

As by the attribute of truth we identify religion with the highest reason, so by the attribute of holiness we unite religion with the perfect moral goodness. Religion demands truth and righteousness, and believes in truth and righteousness, because God is true and holy.

The attempt is sometimes made to define this attribute by analysing it into various aspects of moral relationship, as distributive justice, rectoral justice, punitive justice, fidelity to promise, etc. But all these do not so much make up or constitute the holiness of God, as serve as illustrations of it. They are but forms in which it is exercised, and the variety of the forms it is scarcely possible to enumerate. It is better, therefore, to contemplate the holiness of God as the glorious moral perfection of His being, out of which all moral law and order springs. It is that which corresponds to, and satisfies the sense of right within ourselves by which we apprehend the moral quality of all spiritual being and activity. As our religious faith asserts in God perfect knowledge, almighty power,



perfect goodness and truth, so does it believe in Him as perfectly, gloriously holy.

In man, perfect holiness is complete consecration to the service of God as the all-inclusive duty, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. xxii. 37). This definition cannot be applied to God. He cannot be set apart to the service of any, inasmuch as He is over all. But He is separate from all evil and moral imperfection; and He is not set apart to, but identical in His very being with all moral perfection. Our highest moral excellence is but a feeble image of the unapproachable glory of His holiness.

All right is founded in truth. There can be no right which has not truth, fact, reality as its basis. That God is holy is inseparably connected with the fact that He is a God of truth. The right is that in action which corresponds to truth in the understanding. Truth in knowledge is right because it is truth. All right is truth, and all truth is right. They are in their deepest nature one as they exist in God, and as God is one. The man who is most deeply penetrated by the sense of both one and the other is most like God. The right and the true constitute the place of our profoundest worship. It is before the splendour of God's truth and holiness that our entire being bows with adoring reverence. As by religious faith St John beheld the truth and holiness of God shining into human understanding, he says :

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."  
"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "Yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ: and these things we write that our joy may be fulfilled." These attributes of God thus enter into the highest religious life.

In the Old Testament the attribute of moral perfection in God is presented as holiness, justice, and righteousness; holiness in His temple which is holy because of His presence, justice in His judgments and law, righteousness in all His moral government and providential administration. From the beginning of the history of Israel this attribute is a most prominent part of their religious faith. Their first impressions are those of righteous judgment. At the Red Sea God is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," Ex. xv. 11. The revelation of Sinai by which the nation was founded was emphatically a revelation of holiness, and from this time forward, all religion, all law, and all ethics proceeded from the central thought of God as a holy God and His people as a holy people; Lev. xi. 44. The word used in the Hebrew language to express this idea signifies to be bright, new, fresh, clean, as nature in the spring or after rain, hence the beauty of holiness. It is in God an unapproachable moral perfection; He is glorious in holiness. This is the positive

side ; and the negative corresponds, free from spot and stain, separate from all defilement. This is the condition of all human approach to the God of holiness (Isa. vi. 3-7). And hence in every age as to-day the vision of this holy God unveils to us all the sinfulness of our own hearts and lives, and humbles us in the dust before Him (Isa. vi. 5). Thus while to the Greeks, with whom the æsthetic ideal was most prominent, the beautifully good, *το καλοκαγαθον*, was the object of admiration ; to the Hebrews, to whose consciousness the ethical ideal was more vivid, the glory of holiness is the object of profound, humble, reverent worship (Ps. xxix. 2).

The Spirit of God as the universal worker of all things in the universe is in the Old Testament as in the New, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of holiness. He is present in the beginning (Gen. i. 2) ; He garnishes the heavens (Job. xxvi. 13) ; and He gives life to man (Job xxxiii. 4). Rising to the moral sphere, He gives to man understanding, *i.e.* moral discernment, the sense of right (Gen. vi. 3 ; Job xxxii. 8 ; Ps. li. 11) ; and of truth (John xvi. 13). From this the step is easy to the full New Testament conception of the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier of the human heart and of the Church of God. The holiness of God working through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit in His creatures links religion with moral renewal, and cleanses from God's creation all the defilement of sin, and will finally present the new heavens and the new earth, the restored

moral order of the universe, beautiful with the glory of the holiness of God (Rev. xxi. 1-5).

*Love.*

This attribute is in a peculiar sense the supreme element of the New Testament revelation and of the Christian idea of God, "God is love." The Old Testament is possessed of elementary conceptions leading up to this great culmination. The idea there is still passing through its phases of development in the human mind, from instinct up through all the varied phases of human affection; and the terms expressive of these affections are applied to God. But these terms in Greek had become so intermingled with human and often sinful passion that they fell below the power of a pure religious conception; and in the New Testament, a new term, *ἀγάπη*, which already appears in the Septuagint, is consecrated to the higher idea of the expression of the love of God. This word seems to express not merely personal affection in a stronger sense than our word friendship, but a passion for doing good. Benevolence is too abstract, it lacks the personal character, and hence the depth of feeling embodied in Divine charity. The New Testament word comes to us, perhaps, allied to *ἀγαθος*, which makes it a spring of all doing of good, and to *ἀγαμαι*, signifying to admire, to respect, to prize, to esteem, giving the benevolent impulse a personal direction, founded on personal character. Thus severed from all sinful passion the word

becomes a fitting vehicle to express our regard for the Eternal Father, and His regard for us His children.

The attribute thus expressed like the more general conception of the goodness of God is an impelling motive to action; not as a compulsion, or obligation, but as a joyous and strong desire. It longs to bless the objects of its love, and in this desire it knows no limit; it gladly gives all that it possesses. It is the very opposite of selfishness; it is self-sacrifice. It forgets all self in the supreme delight of the blessedness of the object of its love.

But this love in its very nature as a personal affection asks return. It blesses and delights in blessing, but it takes with equal joy the cup of blessing from the hand of love. It is a joy in giving and a joy in receiving. Love is thus the most intimate communion of spirit with spirit. As it gives all and takes all, in perfect love there arises a perfect unity as well as a perfect joy of life. Love thus becomes the highest moral perfection. It is truth, justice, right, all on a higher platform, in a word, the love of God is perfect holiness. When we ascribe love as an attribute to God, it implies that from all eternity there exists with God a person of His love, one to whom He imparts all the fulness and blessedness of His own being, and from whom He receives all the infinite fulness of love in return (John xvii. 24). It is well worthy of note that the revelation to us of this eternal Son is made at the same

time as the revelation of the love of the Father, and in the same great work of human redemption (John iii. 16).

It also implies that in time God's creatures are the objects of His love as well as of His goodness. But goodness extends to all as partakers of well-being. Love is the relation of creatures partaking of the same nature, and extends to all who share in His image. And to all such God extends His love, and seeks from them love in return. If they make no return of Divine love and fall from the Divine love, by that very act they so far separate themselves from the love of God. We have already seen how completely the Old Testament sets forth the goodness of God. The recognition of Divine love is also not wanting there. The love of God is however there presented only under two forms, first as a love to the chosen people, which is largely set forth in Deuteronomy and in the later prophets and psalms; and again as love to the righteous and the saints and the upright in heart. The wider love which reaches even the sinner, and the infinite love which fills eternity is not yet revealed. The way for it is only opened by the revelation of a personal relation of God to His people and to those who are seeking Him with all their heart. The depth of feeling of this relation is expressed by the term loving-kindness, a word which combines goodness and mercy with love, uniting both in one wide view of the benevolent and beneficent nature of God. It is



from this Old Testament view that our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount commences to build that supreme view of the love of God which is the glory of Christianity. He is speaking to men, and pressing upon them their duty ; "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you ; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven ; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." From this first comprehensive but practical beginning of this higher teaching He gradually leads them by His words, but still more by His life, which was the very incarnation of Divine love, and finally by His Spirit guiding them not only into the truth, but into the personal feeling of the Divine love, until John, the apostle of love, proclaims its breadth and fulness in such words as these, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life ; and Paul in such as this : "God commendeth His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

But it is in our Lord's own last words that the infinite and eternal fulness of love as an attribute of God is opened up. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." "Father, that which Thou hast given Me I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me ; that they may behold My

glory which Thou hast given Me ; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." And yet this infinite and eternal love is not severed from God's love to man, for He goes on to pray "that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them, and I in them." It is from such themes as these that St John rises to his supreme conception, the highest point to which religious faith has reached, "God is love."

## CHAPTER III

### THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD

THE doctrine of the Attributes would lead us directly to the consideration of the personality of God, but before turning to this, we must consider an element of religious faith which qualifies all the Attributes. This might be summed up in one word, perfection ; but unless we turn our thoughts to at least some of the varied aspects of this perfection, our idea of it will be exceedingly limited.

It is the more necessary for us to make this study precede that of the personality, because it is often assumed that the perfection of God's being excludes personality. We should therefore know what the true conception of this perfection is as revealed in Scripture and to religious faith ; and so must find its unity and harmony with the true idea of Divine personality.

We have used the plural to fix our attention upon the fulness and variety of the Divine perfection. But when we speak of the perfections of God, it must not be thought that we can enumerate these. We can only attempt to set forth in a very imperfect way some of the elements which are involved in a true religious

faith, and unfolded in the teaching of Scripture. The attempt must be exceedingly imperfect, for here both human thought and human language fail to express that which we feel, but which surpasses our highest thought. It is here especially that reason sometimes makes this limitation of human thought, or rather this limited and hence utterly imperfect human conception, contradict that which the heart feels as certain truth. It is, however, the limitations, and not the certainties of reason that seem to contradict our faith.

The movement of the human mind by which it arrives at the idea of the Divine perfections is twofold.

The first in order of development is that of religious faith. As this faith is positive, and grasps the great attributes of God, power, intelligence, goodness and rectitude, the perfections are first apprehended in concrete relation to these attributes. As faith apprehends and trusts in the power of God, it cannot limit its confidence; it desires, seeks and by faith rests in boundless power. As it stands in the presence of Divine intelligence, it instinctively recognises the infinite extent and the absolute perfection of His knowledge. As it turns to a Divine heart of goodness and love, as faith it cannot question the infiniteness and the eternal and immutable steadfastness of that heart of unbounded goodness upon which we rely. And so in the conflict and sin of human affairs, even the old Greek mind so felt the immutability and indestructibility of justice, that it

could not but believe that it must be done. These elements of religious faith all assert themselves in this absolute form in the deeper and more earnest feelings of our religious nature.

What is thus given in religious feeling is confirmed by an entirely distinct process of reason. Reason like faith asserts power, causal energy ; and as it traces this power back to its ultimate source, it can only rest in the eternal, the uncaused. To this uncaused it can set no limit, and it can conceive no change, as that which is the first of all must be itself eternal, and that which is the cause of all must be itself uncaused, so that which is the fountain of all must be itself inexhaustible, *i.e.* infinite. Reason thus leads if not to the infinite, eternal and unchangeable God, at least to such a first cause.

That the rational process follows the religious faith, and that the mind of man does not reach these highest conceptions apart from the influence of religious communion with God, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, appears evident from the fact that the Hebrew people, as represented in the book of Job and in the second Isaiah, as well as in many of the psalms have already reached it, while the Greeks and Hindoos, with a much more perfectly developed philosophy, did not distinctly attain to it. There lay in them all a concealed dualism, which limited their conception even of the first cause. Hebrew faith laid hold of the spiritual, and boldly grasped in that the all-sufficient source of all that is.

The scriptural conception of the Divine perfection can best be studied under its various elements, which may be imperfectly enumerated as follows:—Self-sufficiency, All-sufficiency, Eternity, Immensity, Infinity, Immutability and Unity.

*Self-Sufficiency.*

One of the most direct assertions of this perfection is found in Rom. xi. 34-36: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen." Compare 1 Cor. viii. 6. The first of these passages is a simple outburst of religious emotion arising from the contemplation of the wonderful work of God in His providential government. It is the deep and overwhelming conviction that God derives His plans, His power, His being from none; that His ways are the outcoming of the fulness of His own being; that in Himself He possesses the infinite fulness that fills all things; that He depends on none; all depend on Him. The same vast conception forces itself upon our thought in the presence of the great works of nature, and is expressed in such passages as Isa. xl. 13, 14, 28. Here the creating Spirit not only informs and creates all, but understands all, and He, "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not,



neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding. On the other hand, it is the course of moral government which calls out from Bildad such exclamations as these: "Dominion and fear are with Him. He maketh peace in His high places. Is there any number of His armies? and upon whom doth not His light arise?" Job xxv. 2, 3. Both are perhaps combined in the words of Elihu; Job xxxv. 5-7. By such steps as these, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the minds of these men were led to a faith which grasped very firmly the idea of a God whose boundless resources of being are in and of Himself alone, who owes nought to any, but is "before all things" since "by Him all things consist."

There are two terms in which philosophy has attempted to express this perfection; these are "necessary being," and "absolute being." Both these terms seem to us inadequate and possibly misleading. If by necessary being is intended nothing more than that it is not possible that God should not be, then there is no objection to the idea, but it by no means expresses the religious faith which grasps the self-sufficiency of God. If, on the other hand, it contemplates the existence of God as arising by fate, then that very thought of arising, becoming, even though it be carried back through the infinity of an eternal series, involves an element of error. God does not become, He is. Jehovah, "I am" is His name. So if by absolute being is intended

only to say that God does not depend on any, there is again no objection to the term, though as before it is but the negative side of a religious faith which finds in God an infinite fulness. But if it is so construed as to deny all possibility of relation, either in His own being or by the creation of a finite world which coming from Himself, is still in some proper sense other than Himself, then it involves serious error, inasmuch as it, by implication, strips God of all that constitutes spiritual existence. This absolute unrelated essence without an object can neither know, love, nor act. It becomes a virtual zero. On the other hand, the postulate of religious faith may be summed up thus:—

1. God is without derivation, in, of, and by Himself alone.

2. There is none beside Him who is not dependent on Him.

3. His existence is without contingency, it cannot and never could fail to be.

4. It is without limit, and cannot be made less than it is.

5. That being which He thus possesses in and of Himself, without derivation, without contingency, without limit, is the fulness of all being.

#### *All-Sufficiency.*

This perfection must not be confused with omnipotence. Omnipotence is all-sufficient power. The same perfection qualifies all the other attributes, intelligence, goodness, etc., as well as power

As thus qualifying all the Divine attributes it becomes another aspect of self-sufficiency, inasmuch as the "all" is not simply the finite all of Creation in time, but the infinite all of God Himself in eternity. God alone is the measure of God.

Philosophy has not usually distinguished this perfection from omnipotence, and hence has not enlarged or modified its idea. On the other hand, it is continually present in the scriptural view of the infinite resources of God, especially in such points as the following:—

1. God is cause of all things that are, that have been, or that may yet exist. Thus He "upholds all things by the word of His power"; "by Him all things consist," Col. i. 16. "He doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number," Job v. 9.

2. There is no limit to His wisdom to devise or His power to effect, or His goodness to bestow.

3. He is independent of all aid or condition from without Himself; Job ix. 12; Isa. xliii. 13.

The all-sufficiency of God is expressed in the Old Testament by the name El Shaddai; Gen. xvii. 1, "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." This title becomes the foundation of the covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; Gen. xxviii. 3; xxxv. 11, as distinguished from Jehovah, the name by which God was distinguished from the

non-existent gods of the heathen ; Ex. vi. 3. It thus enters into the very foundations of religious faith ; and it is worthy of remark that the same idea appears in our Lord's agony in Gethsemane, as given in Mark xiv. 36 : " Father, all things are possible unto Thee." We have also already observed it in the strong expression of religious feeling of Paul, Rom. xi. 36 ; which finds a parallel in his discourse before the Areopagites at Athens, Acts xvii. 25.

*Eternity.*

It is an easy step from the idea of God as before all things, the Creator of all, giving to all their being, and as possessing in and of Himself alone the fulness of all being, having as it is expressed by our Lord (John v. 26), " life in Himself," to the conception of the eternal God. But while this idea of eternity antecedent may arise by deduction, the thought of the everlasting God is wrapped up in all strong religious faith. And so in the emotional and devotional language of Scripture, no other perfection is more frequently or strongly expressed than this. Thus the Psalmist declares, " Even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God," Ps. xc. 2 ; and again, " Thy years are throughout all generations," and " Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end," Ps. cii. 24-27. In a remarkably strong passage setting God before His people in the perfection of His being, He is represented as saying, " I live for ever," Deut. xxxii. 40. Isaiah in a

similar strain presents Him as "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," Isa. lvii. 15.

It is with the same profound reverence and adoration of the perfection of God that Paul speaks in 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. St Peter returns to the standpoint of assurance of religious faith in the promises, when he says, "Forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The passage is, we think, to be taken in a purely religious sense, and not as the announcement of a metaphysical fact.

A philosophical theology has presented this perfection as the doctrine of the "eternal now." This conception is however attended with great difficulty to most minds. By a law of our spiritual being all our conceptions are formed under the forms of time and space. These in themselves imply succession, extension, division, and hence limitation. Doubtless God in the mode of His being transcends these limitations, though the creature cannot do so. But in so doing, does He not pass beyond our power to think of Him? It may be that His knowledge of eternity past and future is not a memory on the one side or an inference on the other, but an intuition in which all is alike present to Him, but how this can be we cannot conceive; and while it may be an accommodation to the limitation of our thoughts and language, yet the words of Scripture present God to us in thoughts and forms which bear the impress of time and space.

*Immensity.*

This word is used in modern theology to express the fact that the being of God transcends the limits of space, as well as of time. In the older writers the idea was conveyed by the word infinity, which is now used in a wider sense. The later word is closer to the scriptural presentation, which is made in such words as these, "Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," 2 Chron. vi. 18. The attribute however must always be viewed in relation to the omnipresence of God which as we have seen is the infinite and undivided fullness of His being in every place.

*Infinity.*

This term is used to carry the perfection of God beyond all degree, as the two previous words carry it beyond the limitations of time and space. It finds striking expression in Job xi. 7-9, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." In Ps. cxlvii. 5, this perfection is directly applied to the Divine Knowledge, as also in Isa. xl. 28, "There is no searching of His understanding." From this the application is easy to all the moral attributes. A true religious faith cannot possibly ascribe to God



defect or limitation, and humbly acknowledges and rejoices in the fact that He immeasurably surpasses all our thought; Eph. iii. 19, 20. As might be expected from the limitations of our language, this perfection is usually expressed in negative terms. The infinity of holiness is the exclusion of all unrighteousness, John vii. 18. The infinity of Divine intelligence is without darkness, 1 John i. 5. In Deuteronomy xxxii. 4, positive perfection, and the negation of all imperfection are both combined to set forth the greatness of God. A figurative but remarkably suggestive presentation of this perfection is given in 1 Tim. vi. 16, where, in relation to the limitation of our powers of thought, the all perfect God is spoken of as "dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen nor can see." This perfection is the basis of the Scripture doctrine that God is "unsearchable," a term which expresses the residue of truth which remains in the modern doctrine of the unknowable.

In Scripture the attributes express the positive content of that being of God which the doctrine of infinite perfection carries beyond all limits or capabilities of our thinking. We thus do know something of God, though we cannot know Him to perfection. We apprehend according to our limited measure where we cannot comprehend. The doctrine of the infinite perfection of God is a faith, rather than a demonstrated knowledge, like all faith reaching out toward the unseen

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with an assurance which brings full conviction as well as in some measure present possession, Heb. xi. i.

### *Immutability.*

The immutability like the eternity of God is a correlate to His self-sufficiency. He who exists of Himself alone, and possesses in Himself all the infinite fulness of being ; cannot be changed ; in His very nature, He cannot be greater, and He cannot be made less. There is none beside Him by whom He may be changed, and none by whom He is limited.

The scriptural teaching however is again entirely from the standpoint of religious faith, and not from that of ontology. The immutable God is presented to us as the firm foundation of an unwavering faith. It is when his own strength is failing and his days shortening, that the Psalmist calls to mind the immutable strength of his God, contrasting this with the perishing nature of all created things. "They shall be changed. But Thou art the same and Thy years shall have no end." For the establishment of a more complete faith in all the truth of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, the writer to the Hebrews reminds them that "Jesus Christ is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever." The same religious and moral presentation we have in Malachi iii. 6, where the sinning people are reminded that their spared life is a proof not of slumbering justice but of unchanging mercy.

"I, Jehovah, change not, therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

The perfection so presented is not to be construed as denying the activity of God in time and space. The acts of God are finited by His will and are done in time and space or there could be no world like ours. The immutability of God is an immutability of being and perfection and not a sameness of action.

On the other hand, the doctrine of immutability excludes all evolution in God. It is inconsistent with Pantheism. Evolution is of the finite and may take place under the Divine will in the creature but not in the Creator.

#### *The Unity of Divine Perfection.*

That God is one was a most distinctive truth of the Old Testament revelation and was made the foundation of that supreme faith and worship which distinguished the Hebrew religion. The multiplication of gods degrades the worship rendered to any one. Hence the first commandment, and Deut. vi. 4: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might." In a later age this fundamental faith expands to the full recognition of the fact that the Divine perfections and attributes can belong to but one only God, and thus He is distinguished not only from all false gods, but from every finite creature. In that culminating age of the Old Testament

which is represented by the second Isaiah, this truth is asserted with the utmost emphasis of repetition. "I am God and there is none else ; I am God and there is none like Me." "Is there any beside Me? Yea, there is no Rock ; I know not any." "Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me," Isa. xliii.-xliv. The united voice of the Old Testament is thus expressed by the Psalmist, Ps. lxxxvi. 10, "Thou art God alone."

This faith of the Old Testament enters most clearly and fully into the New. Our Lord Himself prays as the highest religious privilege of His disciples, "That they should know Thee, the only true God"; whom He had already taught them to regard as the only God," John xvii. 3 and v. 44. So to Paul "God is one," Rom. iii. 30, alike to Jew and Gentile ; and this became the permanent and universal badge of the Christian faith, as we may see from 1 Cor. viii. 4-6 ; 1 Tim. i. 17, ii. 5 ; Jas. ii. 19 ; Jude 25.

And what is thus taught by inspired faith, is also the teaching of an enlightened Christian reason. The Divine attributes all unite in a perfect harmony. A perfect knowledge, a perfect truth, a perfect right, a perfect goodness and a perfect love, all meet in one perfect, immutable, and eternal living thought and being. We have studied various aspects of Divine perfection, but each of these in the convictions of our highest reason implies all the others. He who exists in and of Himself

alone, who has life in Himself, can have no limits to the fulness of His being, must fill eternity and immensity, can know no change, can have no fellow, and cannot be divided. The very conception of perfection thus points us by the necessity of thought to one only and eternal God.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

THE attributes of God, already considered, lead us gradually up to the Divine Personality. In fact the conception of personality is involved in the complete idea of each of these attributes. Even omnipresence is not mere passive location everywhere, but personal presence, *i.e.* assertion of being, conscious and active existence everywhere. Still more fully is this the case with omnipotence and omniscience — goodness and wisdom. Only in a limited and accommodated sense can these attributes be at all applied other than to a person. The pantheistic conception of being, efficiency, intelligence, or rationality, or even of power working for goodness or righteousness, is not at all an adequate or even proper expression of the Divine attributes as apprehended by religious faith. The religious spirit which rested in such a conception would be an exceedingly feeble religion.

But when we come to the attributes of freedom, truth, holiness, and love, not merely the complete idea, but the very essence of these attributes is inseparable from personality. The essential distinction between a free act and the action of



chemical and physical forces lies in the fact that the first proceeds from a person, the latter takes place among things. Truth also as an active and moral attribute, can belong only to a person, otherwise it becomes a mere quality of thoughts or ideas, or of their expression. It is scarcely necessary to speak of moral character as personal. It can be nothing else ; and love can exist only between persons. If, then, our religious faith in its depth of feeling has apprehended the truth of God in these attributes, it has already apprehended a personal God, and it is not too much to say that true religion can be satisfied with nothing else. It is not a mere play of imagination or rhetorical personification that has led all religions, from the lowest to the highest, to conceive of God as a personal being standing in personal relation to His creatures. It is the demand of our religious nature ; and unless that nature has been made to deceive us, the true God is a personal God. It thus becomes the task of theology to unfold this idea of Divine personality into distinctly expressed if not defined thought.

What is a person? What are the essential elements of personality?

1. Personality is something which is attached to real being. It cannot be predicated of an idea or thought, or conception of the mind. Essential or substantial existence must underlie personality. But all such things are not persons ; therefore—

2. Personality implies self-conscious, intelligent existence. A person knows himself as existing.

His living activity is not mere blind, unconscious motion. He knows himself in all his acts, and knows his acts.

3. But even this does not complete the conception of personality. I may know myself as having closed my eye before a threatened blow without having consciously willed the act. The movement is thus not fully a personal act; it is a mere automatic motion. True personality goes still further, and implies conscious motive toward action—not merely desire or impulse, the consciousness of which does not yet imply full personality, but moral motive and responsibility.

4. The final characteristic of personality is free activity. It is in the exercise of responsibility and of free personal action that true personality in its completeness is asserted and brought into full consciousness. It is this that gives us the sense of true individuality and continuous identity. A mere link in the chain of movements, even though a self-conscious link, cannot be in the full sense a person.

A person is thus an essential being, having in himself the conscious intelligence which directs, the moral motives which originate, and the free will which effects personal activity.

With this conception of personality before us, it is scarcely necessary to ask, Can we ascribe personality to God? We might rather ask, Can we ascribe personality to any other? He alone perfectly fulfils the conditions of this highest state of being. If we possess it in some measure

it is because we are formed in His moral image.

True to this more perfect idea of the nature of personality, religious faith in all ages has not only ascribed to God attributes involving personality, but has directly conceived of God as a personal being. This is the conception of Scripture in the Old Testament as well as the New. In fact, personality is one of the very first elements to appear in all religions, and thus forms an essential part of that conception of Deity which arises in the soul of man as God is revealed in nature. The deeper revelation of personal communion confirms and enlarges this conception, adding to it the highest element of personal love. It is only as the result of philosophical speculation that the idea is obscured, and even after it has been so obscured, it continues to assert itself both in the sense of moral responsibility and in the confidence of religious faith. No speculative conclusions can entirely eradicate from our deeper spiritual nature some feeling of a personal God. The objection usually made to personality in the Deity is that it is inconsistent with the independence and sole-ness of God. This is usually set forth as the doctrine of the absolute. It is said that the very basis of personality is the conscious contrast of the self with the not self. This may be quite true in man, and yet not necessarily true in God. In fact, such a doctrine makes it impossible to connect the eternal God with finite creation in time. Unless the eternal God, by a free, self-

conscious act, can begin to create, there can be no creation ; and either the world and God are one, or have existed side by side from eternity. But the creative act implies, even before creation, the idea of the finite world as distinct from the infinite God, and suggests that in the fulness of His own thought there might lie the materials for the personal consciousness in God Himself from all eternity. The doctrine of the Trinity will lead to a better conception of this. At present we need only say that only a rigid pantheistic philosophy can profess to exclude personality from the idea of God.

The term personality is not used in Scripture although the idea underlies the whole biblical presentation of God and His works. It is clearly the conception of the Old Testament although the doctrine of the Trinity so closely related to its full development appears only in the New. Everywhere and in all possible relations the personal pronoun is used, every form of personal act and personal affection is ascribed to God, and in such a way as to make it impossible to regard this manner of speaking is mere anthropomorphism. But it is especially in the analysis of the attributes themselves that we discover the idea as essentially involved in the religious conception of God. God can only be the God of our deepest heart faith and affections, of our trust, worship, and our love, inasmuch as He is truly a personal God.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRINITY

WE have just seen that the doctrine of the personality of God is an essential part of universal religious faith. The doctrine of the Trinity is not thus universal. It is the subject of more developed revelation, and even in the unfolded conception of God given in the Old Testament, it does not appear in any clearly defined form. It is to be found only in the New Testament as a matter of specific revelation to the more perfect religious faith.

The doctrine is based on three historical elements, each of which is involved in the central Christian faith. These are—

1. The Fatherhood of God revealed through Christ.
2. The Deity of Christ.
3. The personality of the Holy Spirit.

We do not wish at this stage to use these words as the technical terminology of scientific theology, but rather as expressing elements which from the very origin of Christianity entered into its living faith and experience. It was not as a speculative doctrine of eternal generation that Christ spoke of the Father, but as a lov-

ing consciousness coming forth from the infinite depths of His own being, and communicating itself as a new and richer spiritual affection to the hearts of men, so that all learned to say "Our Father which art in heaven." Nor was it as a speculative dogma but rather as a worshiping religious faith that they discerned in Him, God manifest in the flesh. And it was not as a supplement to a speculative doctrine, but through the inward communion of the Holy Ghost that we learn to think of Him as the Comforter, the Helper of our weakness, the loving Spirit who leads and teaches and guides us into truth. It is thus not out of a speculative process but out of the primitive religious faith as it existed in the Church from Pentecost onward that the doctrine of the Trinity arises. The church doctrine is but the attempt of human reason to define these elements and to combine them in harmony of thought with the primary doctrine of the oneness of God. The formation of the doctrine in the Nicene Creed belongs to the field of historical theology. In inductive theology we must begin with the contents of original revelation and of the Christian consciousness of to-day. Of these contents the very first place belongs to

*The Fatherhood of God.*

This is perhaps the crowning element in the revelation made by our Lord Jesus Christ. The idea of God as Father in a national sense



and as a higher term for the Creator does indeed appear in the Old Testament as we have already seen. Jeremiah makes God say "I am a father unto Israel and Ephraim is my first-born." Malachi challenges for God a father's honour, and demands brotherly fidelity towards the brethren of the chosen race. The Psalmist goes a step farther and nearer to the full Christian idea when he presents God in relation to all that fear Him and toward the fatherless children as a God with a father's pity and a father's care.

1. But from the very outset of His ministry our Lord makes us familiar with an enlarged and universal and far more personal conception of this title of God. The Sermon on the Mount pronounces the peacemakers blessed as the "Sons of God." Its calls for the light of a holy life that men may glorify "your Father which is in heaven." It commands us to love our enemies "that we may be sons of our Father which is in heaven," and commands us to be perfect as our "heavenly Father is perfect." The inner chamber prayer is to "our Father which is in secret," and it begins with Our Father which is in heaven. "Your heavenly Father feedeth" the birds of heaven, and knoweth that we have common human needs; and gives His good gifts to them that ask Him. Forgiveness is the forgiveness of the heavenly Father, and He runs to meet the returning prodigal son. In His sight the little children are precious. And before Him we should call no man father on earth for One

is our Father which is in heaven. These are but examples of His common teaching throughout His ministry.

2. To this Father in heaven so constantly held before the thought and faith of His disciples He feels Himself in most intimate and special relation. It is not as an abstract religious principle, but with the deepest affection of His heart that He calls God Father. His own loving faith in the Father is the faith which is to kindle theirs. His life is consecrated not to do His own will but the will of the Father which sent Him ; and they are His brothers and sisters who likewise do that will. His relation to God as His father is thus the guiding and ruling principle of His life. But it is no relation of irreverent familiarity. This Father is Lord of heaven and earth who orders all things and to whom His thanks are due. At the great judgment of the final day, the awards prepared for all will come from this Father's hand. And in His own last agony it is to this Father that He turns, saying, "Thy will be done." And last of all He prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Nor was this fatherhood apprehended only from the side of these deep human religious feelings. There was to Him another vision of the Fatherhood of God beyond the knowledge of men, but which at times broke forth in such words as these, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine

own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." "O righteous Father, the world knew Thee not, but I know Thee, and these know that Thou didst send Me." "Father, that which Thou hast given Me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

Accustomed as the disciples were from the constant teaching and life of Jesus to this conception, and led step by step up to its most mysterious aspects, it is not surprising that their teaching and preaching should continually set forth God as "the Father" and "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and that Paul should give the thought its widest range of meaning when not as a poetic fancy, or far-reaching speculation, but in the spirit of the most exalted devotion He bows His "knees unto the Father from whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named." But this doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood alone would not give us the doctrine of the Trinity; but the foundation for that is laid by the revelation of the Son.

Co-ordinately throughout His ministry as He reveals God as the Father He Himself is manifested as the Son of God. At His baptism there is a supernatural attestation of His Sonship, and in His temptation His own consciousness of Sonship is twice made the ground of the temp-

tation. It is clear from the outset that this consciousness of Sonship was not the common human and religious confidence of a child of God, but something far exceeding this. "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him." Hence a little further on "they that were in the boat worshipped Him saying of a Truth thou art the Son of God"; and Peter to confess Him can find no better words than "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The transfiguration mount again attests His Sonship in the presence of Peter, James and John. Last of all even His enemies charge Him with blasphemy as the "Son of God." This progressive manifestation we have taken from a single gospel, not John but Matthew. Its facts can scarcely be questioned, and they represent elicited testimonies drawn from religious faith by the events. If it is said that this title represents only a human relation not a Divine, we shall see that its use does not so indicate. The title Son of God is indeed in this same gospel applied to men, and by the Lord Himself; Matthew v. 9, 45; but on the ground of moral likeness. But its application to Christ is founded on Divine attributes; holiness, iii. 17; Divine power, iv. 3; Divine knowledge, xi. 27; His teaching and works, xvi. 16. If, indeed, at times the title seems synonymous with Messiah-

ship, it still implies that the Messiah is endowed with the attributes of God.

*The Deity of Christ.*

This manifestation of the Son to the faith of His followers as well as in our Lord's own consciousness, prepares the way for our study of the question of the Deity of Christ, not as a speculation or a theological theory but as a matter of religious faith in the early Church and as now existing in the hearts of all believers, even virtually in the hearts of many who through speculation have been led into doubt. Pliny tells us that the early Christians worshipped Christ as God; how came they to do so? The answer to this can only be gathered from a careful study of the religious faith of the Apostolic Church as we may gather it from the Acts and the Epistles. To these the Gospel of St John, written at the point when the faith was just reaching its full perfection, gives the greatest completeness. From these we shall learn that from Pentecost onward the religious faith of the Church, based upon the deep impression left by the life, works, and teaching of our Lord, and especially upon the lines of thought presented in the preceding section, apprehended in Christ something far beyond even the most wonderful human character. From the very first they feel rather than see in Him the attributes of Deity. But it is only by degrees that these emotions of religious faith develop into defined and fully formed conceptions.



In the Acts of the Apostles we have the record of the earlier preaching, first of Peter and then of Paul, and of the life first of the churches in Judea and then of the Gentile churches. This will lay the foundation for the examination of the Epistles, first of Peter, James, and Jude, and then of St Paul. Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation follow in order of development, and lastly the Epistle and Gospel of St John.

The sermon of St Peter on Pentecost after declaring the true nature of the phenomena then manifest before his hearers as an outpouring of the ancient prophetic spirit, turns at once to the supernatural life and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. These, followed by the gift of the Spirit, are the full demonstration that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, *i.e.* endowed with supreme authority from God, and appointed the anointed head of His chosen people. He thus by direct appeal to a few well-known facts, the latest of which was actually then before their eyes, sets Christ before them as the supreme object of their religious faith. This appeal brought immediate conviction to three thousand souls, to whom Peter at once proceeds to set Jesus forth more definitely as bestowing upon them remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. In a little time the three thousand were baptized and rejoiced in the experience of this new inward relation to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In his next discourse the demonstration of the supernatural character of Christ is founded on a



wonderful work wrought in the presence of all his hearers, to which again he adds the resurrection as the central evidence. This wonderful work, healing the lame man in the temple, demonstrates not the glory of Peter and John but of Jesus, God's "Servant," "the Holy and Righteous One," "the Prince of Life," "whom God raised from the dead." And again there is offered to them in His name the forgiveness of sins now, and another still higher spiritual increase of life from God, when He shall come again to restore all things. The next morning, in the testimony of Peter before the Sanhedrim, this faith is repeated. Christ is "made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation : for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." It may be asked where in these teachings is there implied the deity of Christ? In this that He is here already the direct object of the highest religious faith, faith for works of Divine power which a man like Peter absolutely refuses to arrogate to himself; faith for the forgiveness of sins, for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and for the new life of the final resurrection. The One to whom their faith turns for such things as these is already to their minds infinitely exalted above either human authority or human power. Their conception of Christ is tersely expressed in the words of chapter v. 30-32 : "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree. Him did God

exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

Such is the very earliest form of this Christian faith. It is a religious faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Christ, Prince and Saviour, the Servant of God promised of old, granting forgiveness of sins, the gift of God's Spirit, and the life of a future age beyond the resurrection. We need only ask, Could this by the faith of a Hebrew be ascribed to any less than God? "Who can forgive sins but God only?" expresses a fundamental principle of the Jewish theology which Christ Himself never disputed. The other works ascribed by this faith to Christ are no less Divine. We freely admit that the metaphysical definition of the deity of Christ had not yet been made. We only claim that the religious faith here clearly manifest involved it, and was rapidly leading through the teaching of the Holy Spirit to its conscious conception.

We have now arrived at a point in the history where there is a definite step in this development. Stephen's discourse, interrupted in the midst, did not permit any statement of his idea of the Christ; but his dying words are remarkable. With a vision of the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God before his eyes when falling under the murderous stones, he cries, loud and distinct, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." "Lord, lay not this sin to

their charge." Both are the deepest and most direct turning of the religious heart toward its God.

The new faith was now becoming a recognised and distinct institution in the world. Its method of work was being organised even outwardly, and the duties of its officers defined. Its moral and religious power in the hearts of men was spoken of as the Kingdom of God, of which Christ was King. Its body of followers were known as the Church, and over this the Apostles were exercising authority ; persecution now arose, not merely against individual preachers but against the whole Church whose adherents were being sought out. Its missionaries, going forth from Jerusalem, were extending the Gospel throughout Judea to Samaria, and as far as Damascus and Antioch in the North. It is natural that we should now expect more complete definition of the new religious faith. This comes with the conversion and preaching of Saul of Tarsus.

He was Christ's chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles. Educated in one of the three most important centres of Greek learning, and also at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, he was pre-eminently fitted to carry the faith of the Hebrews to the Gentile world. And now that he had grasped God's new revelation of this faith, and had become conscious of his special commission to the Gentiles, it was perfectly natural that he should present the Divine dignity and glory of Jesus as the object of religious faith, not merely as

the Messiah, nor even as Lord over the Kingdom of God, but as "the Son of God." This was a term which could be understood by the Gentile mind, as the other terms could not. The Messiah and the Kingdom of God were Jewish conceptions, dating back to the prophetic age. The term "Son of God," on the other hand, was a stumbling-block to the Jews, but easily apprehended by the Gentiles as placing Jesus before them as the object of faith and worship, without as yet requiring a metaphysical definition of His nature. At the same time it contained in itself, more fully than the terms "Messiah" or "Lord," the germ of the full idea of Christ which was shortly to become the defined faith of the Church. It was already the term which found its way to the lips of the Roman centurion as he stood beside the Cross. And, notwithstanding the Jewish prejudice against it as blasphemy, the way for it had been abundantly prepared by Christ in His intercourse with the twelve, as we have already seen. While a stumbling-block to the unbelieving Jew, it could not be offensive to the disciples of Christ. From the beginning this was the theme of Paul's preaching. "Straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus that He is the Son of God."—Acts ix. 20. The force of this new term is quite evident from three different points of view. To the disciples of Christ it was associated with those evidences of Divine power and attribute which accompanied its application to Jesus during His lifetime. It could scarcely mean less to them now than it did then. The

Jews evidently interpreted it as conveying the idea of Divine nature and prerogative, otherwise they could not have called its use blasphemy. To the Gentiles, as used in their language and literature, it could only convey the same idea. Here, then, we have the step from the most exalted conception of the office and work of Christ as Divine, to the conception of His nature as Divine. Still, even here, the conception is not so much metaphysical as religious. He is the Son of God, not to speculative theory but to religious faith.

Our first synopsis of a Gospel sermon from Paul is found in Acts xiii. Like Peter, he, after setting forth Christ in His historical relations, sufferings and death, appeals to the resurrection as the fact which gave Divine attestation to Him as the object of religious faith. This religious faith looks to Him as the Saviour through whom is offered remission of sins. But it does so, not only as Messiah and Lord but as "the Son of God."—Acts xiii. 30-37. This is the one instance of an extended sermon by St Paul given in Acts: but in chap. xx. 21, he has given us a synoptic statement of his entire preaching, which implies that it was always substantially the same, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" and a little further on (verse 28), when he speaks of "the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood," if this be the true reading, the doctrine assumes the form not only of implicit religious faith, but even of conscious definition. At this point such a definition



would not be at all surprising from one of Paul's intellectual training and habits of logical thought. It will also be noticed by one who has followed carefully the language of Paul at this period, that another term is most frequently applied to Him with peculiar emphasis of meaning. This is the term "Lord." It is sometimes "the Lord"; again, "the Lord Jesus," and again, "the Lord Jesus Christ." In his entire use of this term it is the expression of the highest religious faith and worship. The Gospel which he preaches is "the right ways of the Lord," and "the teaching of the Lord," and "the Word of the Lord." The miraculous power of Divine judgment is "the hand of the Lord." The authority by which he preaches is the command of the Lord, set forth in words of Old Testament prophecy. In prayer and fasting he commends the Church to the Lord on whom they had believed; and is himself commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. He directs the Philippian jailer to "believe on the Lord Jesus," and he is said to have believed "in God," while of Crispus it is said he "believed in the Lord." But it is quite unnecessary to carry this further. This title is associated in Paul's use with the highest acts of religious faith and worship, such as are rendered to God Himself. In one respect Paul's use passes beyond that of Peter in the earlier chapters; Peter speaks of Jesus as made or constituted "Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36), showing that he has before his mind His office in the Kingdom of God. Paul does not use the term thus.



To him it may be either a term of office or of nature. It is a term expressing the deepest religious feelings, and seemingly inclusive both of Divine nature and office. The secret of the life-long use of this term with the deepest reverence by St Paul seems to be opened up to us by his own account of his conversion, when, as he tells us, he "saw the Lord," and in submitting his heart and life to Him used this very word, "Lord, what shall I do?"

This historical review of early religious expressions of faith in the Hebrew and Gentile Churches and of the preaching, both of Peter and of Paul, will prepare the way for the study of their Epistles. With Peter we may group James and Jude as expressing the faith of the Jewish Churches.

In these writings we find much more fully developed conceptions than those to be found in the earlier chapters of the Acts. First of all the fully extended title, "The Lord Jesus Christ" is now used by all. In St James, it is used not only at the beginning in immediate juxtaposition and co-ordination with God Himself, but again in the second chapter it has attached to it the Divine attribute "of glory." In the first Epistle of St Peter it is used but once, but there in the unique expression, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," reminding us of his own confession in former days, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." In the second Epistle it occurs several times; and in relations which belong to

the Divine. The Kingdom which is so often spoken of as the Kingdom of God is here "the Eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Grace and knowledge" as well as "glory" belong to "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." To St Jude He is our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, and his final doxology is presented to "the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is surely not too much to say that the faith of these Apostles of the Jewish Church thus expressed in this title a full Divine reverence and worship paid to Jesus Christ. But in addition to this there are many other remarkable expressions of such supreme religious regard. The use of the title Lord now quite corresponds with that of St Paul. Frequently it is used in such connection that we must apply it to Christ as in the expression "the coming of the Lord." Again it is used of acts and attributes which can be applied to God alone. And yet we can find no attempt to distinguish the application to God from that to Jesus Christ. The least that we can infer from this is that in their religious faith and worshipping thoughts, the two were not severed.

One peculiar use by St James leads to another evidence of the religious attitude of his mind toward the Lord Jesus. The sick is to be anointed in the name of the Lord, and "the prayer of faith shall save the sick. The Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins it shall be forgiven him," Jas. v. 15.

Note here the name of the Lord is invoked in prayer, and he gives the answer, and forgives the sin. No words could express more certainly a religious recognition of Christ as God. This same ascription of the function of Deity to Christ appears in St Peter. The prophetic spirit is the Spirit of Christ. He is the "gracious" one whose mercy is tasted by sinners, and for "His sake" we are to be obedient to all law. In our hearts we are to "sanctify Christ as Lord" and for "His mercy" we look unto eternal life.

With this clear evidence of an attitude of the highest religious faith, reverence and worship on the part of these Apostles of the Jewish Church, an attitude such as the Jewish faith allowed toward God alone, we are quite prepared to accept the revised translation of 2 Peter i. 1, "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Certainly such language would be in entire consistency with their habitual attitude toward the Lord Jesus.

We may now turn to the development of this faith in the Churches of the Gentiles through the instrumentality of St Paul. We have already noted that at the very outset of Paul's preaching, as recorded in the Acts, he begins to "proclaim Jesus that He is the Son of God" (Acts ix. 20), and to "prove that this is the Christ." This seems to be a reversal of the order of Peter, as with him Jesus is first the Christ, and as Christ the Son of God, "exalted a Prince and a Saviour to grant repentance to Israel and remission of sins." But with Paul the Sonship is first and

the Messiahship a consequence. An example of this Pauline preaching we have already studied in Acts xiii. 32-39, when the Sonship, the Resurrection, and the remission of sins are the prominent topics.

Turning now to the Epistles of St Paul, we begin with the earliest, those addressed to the Thessalonians about the year 52. Here, exactly as in the Acts, Jesus is "the Lord Jesus Christ," in juxtaposition and co-ordination of relation to the Church with God the Father. Why add the term Father here if he had no conscious idea of God the Son. The two seem to be not only united but also distinguished, but in the same act of religious acknowledgment. A Hebrew of the Hebrews could not place a merely human Messiah in this place of Divine dignity by the side of the Father. The Church is not only "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ," but their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope are in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father," and they turned from idols, "to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven," "even Jesus which delivereth us from the wrath to come." So throughout the Epistle Christ is "the Lord," chap. ii. 15, 19; iii. 11, 12, 13; iv. 1; v. 9, 27, 28; and as Lord exercising Divine attributes and authority, avenging sin, iv. 6, coming to judgment, iv. 15, whose word Paul speaks, v. 15, and with whom we shall be forever, v. 17, whose grace is with the Church, v. 28. So in

the second Epistle, He is with the Father, the source of grace and peace, judgment is His, i. 7-9 ; he is joined with the Father in comforting the Church, 16, 17 ; commands are given in His name, iii. 6, 12 ; and the benediction is from "our Lord Jesus Christ," iii. 16-18.

Here, then, is not it is true a dogmatic attitude or a formulated statement, but an attitude of feeling and religious faith, which of itself begets a manner of thinking and speaking very much akin to that of Peter, James and Jude, but perhaps more full, which places our Lord Jesus Christ, not merely in Messianic dignity and office, but as the object with God the Father of religious worship and faith such as is due to God alone.

The next group of Epistles, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, were written near together and represent the same period of development, about A.D. 57, 58. Between this and the date of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, Paul had come largely into conflict with the Judaizing party, representing the earliest dogmatic controversy in the Church. In all ages controversy has been a most powerful agency in promoting the conscious definition of religious truth. Prior to the rise of controversy its expression is emotional rather than logical. But when speculation enters the Church and opinions are broached which jar on the religious feeling, then the Church begins to question her own religious heart, and out of its depths to define more clearly that which she believes. It is this which even in the New

Testament itself constitutes Paul and John theologians as well as preachers. One of the issues now called in question was the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Judaizing party acknowledged His Messiahship, but denied His deity, and treated Him as mere man. In the second group of Epistles now before us, we find all the forms expressing religious faith in Christ, and uniting Him with God the Father as the object of that faith not only continued but more prominent and numerous than ever before. They occur in these Epistles about one hundred and forty times, and in every variety of application, and with the very strongest collocation of Divine prerogatives: Christ is the Lord from heaven; the Lord of the Judgment day; the Lord by whose will all things are permitted.

But in addition to this we have now appearing more distinct dogmatic statements, in which the religious voice of faith in the Divine Lord passes over into the categorical assertion of a great truth or fact, the deity of Jesus Christ. This occurs in these Epistles three times, Rom. i. 4; ix. 5; and 1 Cor. xv. 47.

These three passages, like all formed statements of doctrine, grow out of the controversy. The tendency of Paul's opponents was to reduce Christ's office, work and dignity, to the level of the Hebrew line of prophets. Granting that he was the Messiah, he was still but an inspired and chosen man. He might perfect but could not supersede the work of Moses and the prophets.



To Paul, on the other hand, Moses and the Prophets were but the forerunners of Christ, and with Him their work ended. Its inmost heart of truth, its spirit, indeed continued, but its outward form, its letter was done away, and to continue it longer would be deadly. Nor was there any need. Christ is all-sufficient. Paul was quite satisfied to count all his Jewish advantages and prerogatives, "loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." In Christ he found the full satisfaction of his religious faith. And Christ is thus sufficient, not because He is a prophet, or even one of the ancient prophets returned, or even more the Messiah himself, but as the Son of God. Through this Divine Son we, who before were only servants, receive the "adoption of sons." Circumcision was the sign of the old bondage, we have entered into a new dispensation of the liberty of the Sons of God. "With freedom Christ has made us free." Hence it is this higher office, prerogative, and nature of Christ which it is important to assert. His relation to David was a part of the Jewish faith in his Messiahship, all right in itself, and most important when Christianity was beginning its mission among the Jews. But a perfect Christian faith grasps a far higher and more comprehensive relationship. It is upon this broad foundation that Paul places his Apostolic commission in Rom i. 1-7. He is separated unto a gospel not concerning the Messiah only, but concerning God's "Son," "who was born of the seed of

David according to the flesh" (the Messiahship recognised as the human form), "who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." He gives ample and cordial recognition to the Jewish, human, Messianic side of Christ's work, but he brings to the forefront the wider and divine point of view. Similarly, when in chap. ix., he approaches the difficult problem of the seeming rejection of the ancient people in the formation of the new and world-wide Kingdom of God, he again with the deepest sympathy recognises the relation of the Hebrew people to Christ and Christianity; but He cannot stop there, for He is not only the Messiah of the Jews, but "over all, God blessed forever." In both these passages Paul has not lost one whit of his religious fervour; his faith is still filled with the deepest religious sentiment; but it has assumed more complete intellectual definition. And this intellectual definition, holding up before his distinct consciousness the Deity of his Lord, at once lifts his faith to a wider outlook, and fills his heart with a deeper reverence.

The third passage presents to us another development of the doctrine. 1 Cor. xv. 47. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." It will be noticed that

the Revisers omit "the Lord," although it is found in the Sinaitic Ms. and in corrected A. But whether with or without the title "Lord," the origin of the first Adam is here pointed out as of the earth, human and mortal, and his character corresponds. The second is from heaven, for the preposition denotes origin, and character, "heavenly," follows.

Christ is thus to Paul clearly not a natural man, but a supernatural being. His words are an echo of the language of the Lord Himself, recorded by John, "I came down from heaven." That this point settled the definition of the nature of this supernatural being is easily made clear from St Paul's whole manner of speaking of Him. He cannot be less than Divine. The image to which Paul aspires is the image of God.

The last group of Epistles of Paul belongs to the days of imprisonment. They were written probably from Rome A.D. 61 to 64, under circumstances which called out the Apostle's deepest feelings, and gave him a vision of all the mysteries of religious faith. In the solitude of the dungeon the Spirit opened up to him the infinite mercies and the eternal purposes and the results, surpassing all powers of thought, which God is working out through all the ages, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here, then, we may expect to find Paul's highest conception of the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor are we disappointed. In the very first of these Epistles, that to the Philippians, written about A.D. 61, we meet the following

passage:—"Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being formed in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient, even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name ; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." If we had not been already prepared by tracing the gradual development of Paul's conception of Jesus Christ, we might well be staggered at the fully-expanded dogma which is contained in this passage. Even as it is, we see a great step here beyond the strongest statement yet considered. First of all it clearly predicates the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, and that in the form of God, and with a dignity which was on an equality with God. This dignity He resigns, and the steps of His voluntary humiliation are one by one recounted down to the Cross. Then He is exalted to a new dignity, a dignity which surpasses that of every name in the universe of God ; and in this new dignity He is to be honoured, served and worshipped by every creature, to the glory of God the Father. Again, the title Father compels us to think of the Son, and the doctrine seems almost completely developed in the thoughts of

Paul. Note again how this logical unfolding of thought still holds fast to the depths of religious spirit.

Turning to the Epistle to the Ephesians, we meet with a peculiar presentation of the Fatherhood and the Sonship, now so distinctly held in relationship in the mind of Paul. The Father is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The pre-eminence of the Father is thus clearly asserted (chap. i. 3), and is carried through the chapters following into the whole range of mediatorial work.

But this Father is "the Father from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named." Paul has thus quite clearly in mind the idea of a heavenly Fatherhood; as he had told us years ago that the second man is from heaven, and that we are to bear the image of this second Man from heaven as we have borne the image of the earthy. A little further back (chap. i. 5), he had told us that this Father of our Lord Jesus Christ had chosen us "in Christ, before the foundation of the world," and "foreordained us unto adoption as Sons, through Jesus Christ, unto Himself," and that He purposed in Him to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth," placing Him "at His right hand among the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." It may be said that this is only an expansion of the Mes-

sianic glory ; but it is an expansion which runs along the same line of thought which we have found in the Epistle to the Philippians, and there, as here, was carried into a pre-existent eternity as well as into the future, and which there was expressly founded on a pre-existence in the likeness of God.

This remarkable presentation of Christ is still more expansively defined in the closely related Epistle to the Colossians, the third of this group. It begins by setting before us "the *Father*," who hath translated us into the kingdom of "*the Son of His love*" (Col. i. 13), "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for in Him were all things created in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things have been created through Him and unto Him ; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Col. i. 15-17) ; "And He is the head of the body the church ; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell ; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross ; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." To this certainly belongs the sentence in chap. ii. 9, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily."



The conception of Jesus Christ expressed in these three Epistles may be then briefly summed up thus :—

1. A definite conception of the pre-existence of the Christ, not as a mere purpose or thought of God, but in real being.

2. The antecedence of this Being to all creation.

3. That through Him all creation took place, as in and by Him all the works of God lead to one supreme end, which is centred in Him and in His cross.

4. That He is in Himself the image of the invisible God, in whom God hath made all fulness to dwell.

5. That thus in dignity, authority, and power He stands supreme over all the universe of God.

It will be seen, again, that all this unique conception springs from, and ministers to, religious faith. It is but the fully enlightened expansion of the religious reverence with which Paul from the beginning thought and spoke of his Lord. These highest flights of thought, seeking to grasp that which is beyond all that we can think, like Isaiah's vision of the throne, but bow his spirit in the deeper reverence of Him unto Whom is glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The remaining three pastoral epistles were written for a practical purpose, and in the midst of great suffering and most distracting circumstances. It was not the time of quiet contem-

plation, but of severe suffering, desertion of friends, preparation for trial before the imperial tribunal, waiting for sentence, expecting death, yet carrying the burden of the churches, and all this in the feebleness of broken strength and old age. We therefore miss the extended paragraphs that reach out into eternity, and cast a glance of triumphant faith over all the works and ways of God. But we do not miss the thoughts themselves, or the familiar forms of expression. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Here is the idea of pre-existence. "There is one God, one Mediator, also, between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." Here is, at least, a suggestion of One who is not only man, but more than man, of whom we need to be reminded that He is also man.

The remarkable expression in chap. iii. 16 is scarcely less significant, whether we read *ος* or *θεος*. "He who was manifested in the flesh," implies a mysterious pre-existence, impenetrable to man as is the existence of God Himself, and places our Lord in the thoughts of the writer entirely above the nature of mere humanity. The same is involved in the solemn invocation of Christ Jesus with God and the elect angels, before whom He is placed in chap. v. 21, and of God and Christ Jesus alone in chap. vi. 13, even if we interpret ver. 15, with its divine titles, to God the Father and not to Christ, as the revisers seem inclined to do. All the expressions show that

in this epistle we are in close touch with the same lofty conception of Christ's nature and prerogatives. In the second epistle (chap. i. 9, 10) there is still more distinct reference to the line of thought unfolded in Ephesians and Colossians, where our Lord is placed above all created beings. And finally, in Titus ii. 10-14 and iii. 4, we have Paul's final expression, "The glory of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ," as well as the more simple and direct, but not less expressive, term, God our Saviour. The whole line of development, and mode of thought and expression, which we have traced through the writings of St Paul, seems amply to justify the application of these last terms to the Lord Jesus Christ in their full significance.

We are now prepared to summarise in chronological order the doctrine of Paul on this point of the Deity of Christ. Beginning with Jesus as the Son of God, and so the Messiah, he from the beginning of his ministry sets Him forth as the object of faith, hope, love and worship with the Father. Further on, in opposition to the Judaizing conception of Christ as a mere man, he distinguishes the term Son of David from Son of God, applying the first to Christ in His human, and the second in His divine nature, placing Him "over all God blessed for ever," and contrasting Him with the first Adam, as "from heaven"; and uniting Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit in benediction. He next advances to speak of Him as pre-existent, in the form of

God, on an equality with God, the image of the invisible God, the fulness of God, and the instrument of all creative work, and the One in whom all things consist. Finally, he speaks of Him as God our Saviour, and the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the One who was manifest in the flesh received up into glory.

In this progressive exhibition of his religious feelings and thoughts we see how fully and continuously to the mind of Paul the Father from whom all Fatherhood in heaven and earth is named and the Son through whom all Sonship is bestowed are correlated and familiar ideas, together carried back into a past eternity.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TRINITY CONTINUED

WE now turn to the development of Christian faith which followed the death of St Paul. It consists of three parts :—

1. An epistle to the Hebrew Church written by someone of the Pauline school, dealing specially with the Judaizing tendency to exalt and perpetuate the Mosaic institutions, and to lower the idea of Christ's nature and work. It probably dates at the time of the persecutions which immediately preceded the fall of Jerusalem about A.D. 67 to 69.

2. An Apocalypse addressed to the Gentile Churches of Asia Minor by John, the date uncertain, but either during the persecutions under Nero or Galba about A.D. 69, or the persecution under Domitian, A.D. 95.

3. We have the final expression of Apostolic faith in the epistle and Gospel of St John towards the close of the first century. As might be expected from the line of Pauline development which led up to it, as well as from the Judaizing and Jewish persecutions to which the Hebrew Christians had been exposed, the epistle to the Hebrews opens with a remarkably full and ex-

plicit presentation of the Divine glory of the Son, chap. i. 1 to ii. 3. This is followed by an argument, or rather series of arguments extending to chap. x. 18, setting forth the superior dignity of the head of the New Dispensation, and containing repeated allusions and sayings implying Divine honour and attributes. An exhortation completes the epistle, based on the same ground of the nature and exalted dignity of Christ.

In the introduction Christ is God's Son distinguished above all the prophets, heir of all things, instrument of all creation and Providence, the effulgence of the Divine glory, and the very image of His substance ; as God's Son above the angels and the object of their worship, the One of whom it is said :

"Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever,  
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy  
Kingdom."

And again :

"Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the  
earth,  
And the heavens are the works of Thy hands ;  
They shall perish, but Thou continuest ;  
And they all shall wax old as doth a garment ;  
And as a mantle shalt Thou roll them up,  
As a garment, and they shall be changed ;  
But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail."

And yet again :

"Sit thou on My right hand,  
Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet."

Hence the greatness of this salvation which



began to be spoken by this Divine Lord. Several points are notable here:—

1. This is the language of the second generation of Christians, of those who received the Christian faith from the apostles and first disciples. It thus represents the impression which they had received of the nature and dignity of Christ.

2. It embodies all the highest thoughts we have seen embraced in the earliest Christian faith, but gradually shaped into clear definition in the mind of St Paul in the course of his life, labour and conflict.

3. It expresses these not in the guarded and indirect forms natural to one to whom they are coming as a dawning light, but in the direct phrases used by those to whom they have become familiar as established and acknowledged truth. They are not now so much the expression of deep religious emotion as the foundation of earnest logical argument. They are followed at once by a "therefore." In the argument which begins chap. ii. 25, Christ is set forth as superior to angels, ii. 5-18; not only because of His universal dominion, but because all things exist for Him and through Him; the stooping a little lower for the suffering of death was but a needful and gracious step in the progress of His great work, which extends to all things and through all ages. He next appears as superior to Moses and Joshua. He built the house of God, and as the builder He is God, and He is the Son in His own

house ; they are but the servants who were faithful in the house. Thus we have "a great High Priest who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God."

This leads to His superiority to the Aaronic priesthood. Their priesthood is transitory, His eternal ; they are appointed in an earthly temple, He in the heavenly ; they by a law on earth, He by the oath of God ; they as infirm men, He as the Son perfected for evermore ; they are the mediators of a transient covenant, He of a better covenant with better promises ; their sacrifices were mere types, worthless in themselves and unable to give perfect cleansing to the conscience, He through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, and by this one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Such a presentation of this Divine Person who is thus the very foundation of the Christian faith, is once more the ground of an emphatic "therefore." To reject Him is to "tread under foot the Son of God" and to "do despite unto the Spirit of Grace." The faith in Him is the faith of all the good and of all the ages. This faith we are to follow, for "Jesus Christ is the same to-day, yesterday and for ever." It is not surprising that the epistle should end by ascribing to this Jesus Christ with the Father, the glory for ever and ever.

The book entitled in our English Bibles, the Revelation of St John the Divine, is believed to have been written by the apostle who, with

Peter and James, founded the Hebrew Church at Jerusalem. It might thus be expected to continue the more purely religious expressions which characterize the epistles of Peter, James, and Jude. It was written to the Gentile Churches in Asia Minor during one of the great persecutions, either that in which Peter and Paul suffered or that which closed the first century. It represents therefore a new phase of testimony, and may very well be placed beside the epistle to the Hebrews as, if not synchronous in date, at least arising under somewhat related circumstances. Owing to those circumstances, the writer adopts a purely symbolic mode of expression, and hence no directly dogmatic statement is to be found in the book. We can only collect its view of the person and dignity of Christ by observing the method in which the writer speaks of Him and represents Him as speaking and acting.

The book opens with a benediction and a doxology—two acts of religious worship. The first pronouncing grace and peace to the churches “from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth,”—thus associating Christ with the eternal God in a pre-eminently divine act. The second, the doxology and act of worship rendered only to God, is paid to Christ alone.

Next follows a vision of Christ, in which, in chap. i. 18, divine attributes and prerogatives are clearly ascribed to Him ; He is the first, the last, the living one, and holds the keys of death and of Hades. The Saviour who appears in this vision then sends His messages to the seven churches, and each of these messages implies the exercise of the attributes, the authority or the prerogatives of God. He holds the seven stars in His right hand ; judges the churches' works, and ordains their punishment, or will confer their rewards ; restrains Satan ; keeps his saints from the hour of trial. He thus stands as the beginning of the creation of God, and the one who at last will complete his judgment.

Following this introduction, we have a series of symbolic visions : the seals and trumpets, the phials, the thousand years, the city, which have been variously interpreted, but which all agree to represent the unfolding of Divine providence ; the conflict and progress of Christ's kingdom, and the final judgment and consummation in glory. We are concerned only with the place occupied by Christ, and the religious faith of the Church, as indicated by the position assigned Him in this symbolic representation of the present and future history of God's kingdom. The general tenor of the book on this point may be summed-up in a single scriptural expression, "In all things He has the pre-eminence." At the very outset He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb slain, who alone in heaven, or on the

earth, or under the earth, is "worthy to open the book or to loose the seals thereof." Before Him the highest creatures and the elder saints fall down and worship. And in that worship angels, living creatures and elders, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, yea, "every created thing which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them" unite in saying, "Unto Him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever." And the four living creatures said, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshipped. So a little further on, the "great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands," "cry with a great voice, saying, "Salvation unto our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." As the programme advances, the great voices of heaven proclaim, "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." A little later we hear it again, "Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ." Again, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, "having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads." As the final conflict advances,

it is said, "The Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings." And again, "His name is called the Word of God"; and He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

As the incoming of the New Jerusalem approaches, it is said of the saints who have part in the first resurrection, "They shall be priests of God and of Christ." The city itself hath no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, are the temple thereof," and "the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb." And at last, "The throne of God and of the Lamb is in the midst of the street thereof." Such is the final position of the Lord Jesus, on the throne of the universe, with Jehovah God in the midst of the glorified saints receiving their service for ever. And yet the angel which shows these things, true to the sacred reverence of the Jewish religion, refuses all worship, saying, "Worship God." This, then, is no semi-heathen, semi-polytheistic adoration of a great man, or of an angelic being, but deep religious recognition that Christ was God "manifest in the flesh."

But the final consummation and unity of the faith of the Church appears in the two treatises which are probably the latest of the New Testament canon, St John's Gospel and first Epistle. If the same John was also the author of the Book of Revelation it forms a most harmonious



and fitting accompaniment either as the exhibition of the religious spirit out of which the more dogmatic teaching emanated, or as the religious feeling which such teaching was well fitted to create.

The object of St John in writing the epistle was a religious one, viz., that his readers might with himself enjoy fellowship, *i.e.* communion of life, with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This object is to be attained by setting before them "The Word of Life, which was from the beginning, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." We have already found in the Book of Revelation, used unmistakeably as a name of Christ, the expression "The Word of God." Here for the same purpose is used "The Word of Life." In the gospel we shall find it without adjunct "The Word," where this Word is also declared to be "in the beginning," to be "with God," and to be "made flesh and dwell among us." This Word is the Son of God. In this Son we are to abide as "in the Father." "Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; but he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." This Son is the only begotten whom God "sent into the world" to be "the propitiation for our sins." To abide in God we must confess that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," that "Jesus is the Son of God" and that "Jesus is the Christ." And finally "we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him

that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols." Nothing could be more direct and practical than this closing statement. In the midst of the heathen world, called upon to lay down their lives or else to sacrifice to idols, or at best continually solicited to idol-worship, nothing was more important to those Christians than to know and hold fast to and abide in the true God. Now he declares the Son of this true God has come and brought to us the knowledge of this true God, or rather the power of understanding to know Him, and we are in Him even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. As we finally turn to the gospel, we note in advance that the writer advises us that he has written these things "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name." (John xx. 31). The object of the gospel and the epistle is thus one, "he that hath the Son hath the life." For this purpose St John first of all presents us with a thesis or dogmatic statement of his subject. (John i. 1-18). This he follows by a marshalling of proofs or illustrations which he presents in narrative form, inasmuch as they are historic facts with here and there a word of comment. Instead of following this narrative and generally chronological order, beginning with the Baptist and ending with the events following the resur-

rection, we may to avoid repetition adopt the following classification :—

1. Various works of our Lord which evince his deity.

2. Our Lord's own words or discourses.

3. The Testimony of John the Baptist and others.

4. St John's thesis and comments in the course of the narrative which directly state the faith which he is demonstrating to the Church.

The argumentative character of this gospel has given rise to the objection that the narrative has been idealized for a dogmatic purpose. If by this is meant that the writer has drawn his conclusions from his facts and has so presented his facts that his readers may easily see in them the ground of his conclusions, there is no objection to the statement. The facts are doubtless generally interpreted as they are stated or rather are stated as they appeared to the mind of the writer in the light of the interpreting spirit. And we are quite justified in attaching great weight not only to the bald facts but also to the interpretation of those facts by the inspired writer. Even in the record of discourses or in the content of written documents no writer of that period regarded *ipsissima verba* as essential to historical accuracy. They reported the sense generally greatly condensed, and words where they were of such a striking character as to fix themselves in the mind. If on the other hand it is meant that there is either a conscious or unconscious falsifica-

tion of facts by addition, diminution, or distortion, this we cannot for a moment admit. We believe the facts were recalled to the mind of the aged Apostle under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as unfolding to his faith the divine character of his Master. First of all, his own soul has been filled with the fully assured faith that Jesus is the Son of God ; and under the stimulus of this inspired faith there rush back into his mind all the works and all the sayings of our Lord bearing on this faith, facts, many of them not embodied in previous records because not yet fully understood, and so not so clearly remembered, and old facts and words that now stand revealed in clearer light and fuller significance, and in this way we have this most precious addition to the picture of Jesus Christ. This is the simple natural psychological explanation of the peculiar character of this latest Gospel, and there is thus nothing in its peculiarity to detract either from its authority or from our faith in its truthfulness. It gives conclusions both of the writer and of other witnesses but it gives also the facts upon which those conclusions are based ; and thus it is at once dogmatic and historical.

i. St John places in the forefront of his argument a number of special works of our Lord illustrative of his divine attributes. He begins with creative power in the water made wine, chap. ii. 1-11, and the feeding of the multitude, vi. 1-14. He follows this with notable examples of

healing ; the nobleman's son, iv. 46, etc. ; the infirm man at Bethesda, v. 2, etc. ; the man blind from his birth, ix. 1, etc. Finally he gives us a most notable instance of the raising of the dead in the case of Lazarus of Bethany. It will be noted that all three are in perfect harmony with the record of the synoptics. Some of them are there specifically recorded ; all except the making of the water wine are included in classes of works which are repeatedly declared to be habitually wrought by Christ in the course of His ministry. John seems to have chosen a few examples suitable to his purpose, and to have set these forth in detail as the basis of faith in his Divine power and mercy. There is no attempt to invent some stupendous and new species of miracle as a demonstration that Jesus is the Son of God, though this is exactly what an impostor of a later age would have done.

To John's presentation of the mighty works of Christ we may suitably add his extended setting forth of the many infallible proofs of the resurrection spoken of by St Luke. We have already seen that in all the Apostolic preaching the resurrection takes a foremost and unique place in the demonstration to religious faith of the divinity of Christ. It is the special testimony of God to His Son. The first two evangelists each devote to this most important fact a single chapter ; St Luke a very lengthy one, besides the first eleven verses of Acts ; St John two full chapters. Here, again, he enters into detailed account beyond the

others, and yet in general and substantial harmony with them, though the minute difficulties which have arisen in the modern attempts to unite them in a continuous account show that this is not a studied harmony.

2. Again St John gives in connection with these works extended discourses of our Lord, in which He sets forth, with the same reserve as in the synoptists, His Divine consciousness of His Sonship and of God as His Father. The first expression which John records is one in act rather than in words, the assertion of His authority in the temple. It is "His Father's house," and must not be made a house of merchandise; and when challenged for warrant of this authority He in symbol refers to His resurrection. In the discourses we can only call up a few striking expressions: "He that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven"; "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him"; "My Father worketh even until now, and I work"; "The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing; for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner." It is perhaps not necessary to quote the whole of this passage, nor of that which occurs in chap. vi. 46, "Not that any man hath seen the Father save He which is



from God, He hath seen the Father"; nor such as vii. 16, viii. 18, 54. But ix. 35, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" is specially emphatic, as also x. 14, 15, and especially verse 30, "I and the Father are one," followed by our Lord's own commentary. But perhaps the fullest expression of our Lord's consciousness is to be found in His last words to His disciples (chaps. xiv., xv., xvi., and the prayer xvii.): "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me"; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; "I am in the Father and the Father in Me"; "We (I and the Father) will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him"; "The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father"; "He shall glorify Me, for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you"; "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world and go unto the Father"; "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

Without attempting any metaphysical analysis of these remarkable terms, or attempting to extract from their grammatical meaning a precise dogmatic definition, we cannot ignore first their effect as the foundation of the religious faith of the Apostles to whom they were addressed, and, later, of the more fully developed and consciously defined faith of St John himself. He certainly has recalled them to mind and formulated his own faith upon them in the highest significance which they will bear; and they are evidence

not only of our Lord's consciousness of His own divinity, but of the clearly defined religious faith which St John built upon his Master's words. In this last respect they are most important, as we are here seeking, not presumptuously to interpret the mysterious consciousness of our Divine Lord, but to understand clearly the defined and developed faith of the Apostolic Church and the basis from which it was built.

3. A third step to this end we shall find in the confessions and testimonies of faith evoked by the words and works of Christ, and which have also been recorded by St John.

The first is that of John the Baptist, "After me cometh a man which is become before me, for He was before me"; "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." This was the impression made upon the prophetic mind of John and the testimony which he gave—a testimony too which our Lord Himself recalls in after days.

Next Nathanael of Galilee, a man of the highest religious character and insight, perceiving the supernatural knowledge of Christ exclaims, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." John also recalls the confession of Peter in a somewhat different form, and probably on a different occasion from that given in the other evangelists, "We have believed, and know that Thou art the Holy One of God." To this he adds that of the blind man, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him"; and that

of Martha, "Lord, I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even He that cometh into the world"; and, finally, of doubting Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Once more these testimonies are not quoted in the ordinary way of textual proofs, but as evidences adduced by St John in support of his thesis that Jesus is the Son of God, and especially as evidences of the faith which St John is here presenting and supporting.

4. But last of all we shall take this faith from his own words, especially in the prologue of this Gospel, which, after the Hebrew manner, is the thesis which he sets out to establish as well as the expression of his defined faith.

This prologue extends from verse 1 to the end of verse 18 of the first chapter, the reference to John the Baptist in verse 15 being a seeming interjected anticipation. The very strongest presentation of this faith of St John would be given by quoting the passage at full length, but it is so familiar to all Christian readers that this is unnecessary. But note the terms—the Word, God, in the beginning, with God, creating all things, the fountain of life and light, lighting every man that cometh into the world, coming to His world which He had made, but which knew Him not, and to His own people who received Him, not giving to all who received Him power to become Sons of God, becoming flesh and yet manifesting the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and as the only

begotten Son (or God) in the bosom of the Father, proclaiming that God to men whom no man hath at any time seen. Such is the fully developed Christian faith of St John—a faith not simply in religious emotion but in clear conscious definition; or, to use his own word, understanding. In thorough harmony with this detailed presentation are the reflections which he makes in the course of his argument, such as chaps. ii. 11; iii. 16-21, 31-36; v. 18; x. 33, and his summing up in chap. xx. 31.

We may now profitably compare this defined and developed faith of St John with that of St Paul. The coincidence is best seen in the Greek words used.

(1) Of our Lord's pre-existence St John uses the formula *ἐναρχην*; Paul, *ὑπαρχων*.

(2) Of his nature St John uses the term *υἱος μονογενης*; Paul, *υἱος* simply.

St John, *λογος*; Paul, *μορφη θεου, εἰκων θεου*, followed by the writer to the Hebrews with *ἀπαυγασμα της δοξης* and *χαρακτηρ της ὑποστασεως*.

(3) Each ascribes to Him creation and precedence to all created beings and things.

(4) St John calls Him God, simply as a direct predicate; St Paul speaks of Him as God our Saviour, and of His being on an equality with God.

It must be noted that this entire Apostolic development of the Apostolic faith, beginning with an attitude of religious feeling and faith, and ending with a clearly defined manner of religious

thought and speech, is not connected with any attempt at the reconciliation of this faith in Christ as God, with the unity of the Godhead. It was doubtless accompanied by the religious faith and feeling that the Father and the Son are one ; but the attempt by definitions and distinctions in thought to exhibit this harmony, belongs to the field of religious philosophy upon which we think the New Testament writers do not enter, but which was wrought out with immense labour and controversy by ecclesiastical philosophers in the second, third and fourth centuries.

*The Personality of the Holy Spirit.*

We have seen that the pathway to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was prepared by the world's faith and the faith of the Hebrew people in the personality of God. God is not to pure religious faith an unconscious force in or behind the universe of mind and matter. He is a being of conscious intelligence, affection and will, whose every act proceeds from the conscious unity of His own personality. To this question the religious faith of the whole world, in all ages, has but one answer. Any dissent which has appeared comes not from the faith of the religious spirit, but from the conclusions of a form of speculative philosophy. When the religious faith of the Church apprehended Christ as Divine, there was again no question as to personality. This Divine being had appeared among men in

fashion as a man, with all the elements of human personality.

That which men had gradually first to feel and then definitely to believe, was that this person was truly God. We have seen how through His character, His works, His word, and the revealing Spirit, this faith was established in the minds of the Apostles.

The Holy Spirit of God had been on the other hand a familiar thought in the Hebrew religion. To the Spirit of God was ascribed in the Old Testament all creative and operative efficiency in Nature, all natural capacities and power in man, and pre-eminently the superior light and energy which rested upon the prophets and other old-time men of God.

But in the Old Testament, this spirit clearly identified with God, without question regarded as of God and exercising all the Divine attributes and effecting the Divine works, was not personally distinguished from the one God. We do not find any expression which implies even a feeling sense of His distinct personality, or any thought other than that of the immediate presence and power of the one God. And yet the very use of the term "Spirit of God" in connection with a wide class of Divine works having a specific character of creation and inspiration, laid the foundation of the New Testament doctrine of the Third Person in the Godhead.

The term set forth God, not as governing, controlling, judging, punishing, or otherwise working



from without His creatures, but as working in them. If the Spirit is the power of God, it is the unseen power which works in all things.

Even in the New Testament we can find no metaphysical definition of personality. But that which we express by the word is clearly recognized both in the Old Testament and the New; in the Old Testament as an attribute of God in which man participates; and in the New as an attribute of God the Father, of Christ, of men, and as we now hope to show, of the Holy Spirit.

The revelation of the personal Spirit of God to religious faith in the New Testament is quite analogous to the revelation of the deity of our Lord. It is emphatically a revelation of religious faith, mediated first through Christ Himself, and completed through the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit which abides in the Church. As neither the Greek nor the Hebrew language had a word to express the idea of personality in abstract form, we must not look for this revelation even in its greatest completeness in express assertion. We shall find all the distinctive marks of personality applied to Him, such as intelligence, personal affection, personal acts, personal relations. We shall find the forms of speech which are used of persons applied to Him, and that not by the rhetorical figure of personification, but directly and literally. While thus the evidence even of the full apostolic faith is indirect, yet we shall find it quite clear to those who will look for the reality and not the mere name. It begins in

much greater completeness of conception, but does not reach such perfection of expression as the faith of the deity of Christ.

In tracing the development of this faith in the New Testament, we may pursue the following order:—

1. Observe the language, promises and teaching of our Lord Himself in the Gospels.
2. Follow the historic record of the presence and work of the Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles.
3. Examine the language of the Epistles especially of St Paul and St John.

Throughout it will be most important to distinguish tropical language from that which is evidently to be taken literally, and we shall find this not always an easy task.

In the study of our Lord's words we must remember that we have them as recorded by men to whom the Old Testament conception of the Holy Spirit was familiar, and in whose minds the New Testament conception was not yet fully unfolded. We might, therefore, in the Gospel records themselves almost trace a development of thought and expression on this point, not as in the mind of Christ Himself, but in His various reporters. Certainly John's record presents the idea in its most complete form, and has been always the chief source of the Church's faith on this point. To the perfect human consciousness of our Lord the personal communion of the Holy Spirit must have been most real and complete, for God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.

Passing over the mention of the Spirit by the evangelists in the course of their narrative, we find direct words of Christ in three passages of Matthew, two of Luke, and one early passage of St John, besides the full presentation from the fourteenth chapter onward, and the record of Luke in Acts i. In those passages we find a peculiar distinction of language which is very marked in the Epistles, but is consistently maintained here also between the use of the words Holy Spirit with and without the article. The first seems always used of the personal Spirit, the second of the power or influence of the Spirit or the effects of His work. This peculiar use of language, whether we ascribe it to our Lord Himself or to the evangelists as they render His thought into Greek, seems to open up to us an important distinction. On the one side we have the Old Testament mode of speaking of the Spirit continued, but now used only when the idea of His work and its results are more prominent. On the other hand, a new conception of the personal spirit makes its appearance, in which the Divine agent Himself is more prominent than His work. That of this personal presence our Lord Himself should be most fully conscious, we should certainly expect, and His language does not disappoint that expectation. Even in Matthew and Luke, in the three passages where the personal form is used, there is no possibility of mistake as to a distinct thought of personal relation. The first is Matt. x. 20: "It is not ye that

speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." The personality is here very distinct, another person speaking through us. The second is Matt. xii. 31, 32, referring to the sin of blasphemy against the Spirit. Here again the relation is a distinctly personal one, and could be reduced to a figurative mode of speech only by violence to common usage of language. The third passage, Luke xii. 10-12, repeats the ideas of the other two, and so associates the Son of Man with the Holy Spirit in the form of speech, that both must alike be regarded as personal. The very same may be said of the baptismal formula Matt. xxviii. 19. We think these passages all justify the assertion that our Lord spoke with the most complete human consciousness of the personal Spirit of God. In John iii. 5-8 both forms are used, and the connection of thought is not perhaps decisive as to the personal or impersonal conception.

But our Lord's most distinct utterances on this subject are recorded by St John xiv. 16, 17, 26 ; xv. 26 ; xvi. 7, 13, 14 15 ; and by St Luke, Acts i. 2, 5, 8. In these passages He most clearly involves and presents the personality of the Holy Spirit, especially in those personal relations which link Him with our individual spiritual life, and which are summarized in the New Testament expression, the communion of the Holy Ghost. He is the *Ἐπαγγελητος*, or Helper, the one called in, a term peculiarly personal, He is the Spirit of Truth seen, known, abiding, sent in the name of

Christ, teaching, reminding, coming from the Father, bearing witness, convincing, guiding, hearing, speaking what He hears, announcing things to come. Here, certainly, is a personal being, or else one continuous personification of the most unusual character. Who, for instance, ever heard of an impersonal influence or power, hearing and speaking the things which he hears, or being called in to help or comfort.

Again in Acts i. 2, 5 the form without the article is used, and Divine influence or power or grace may be fitly taken as the meaning; but in verse 8 the article is resumed, and the power received is clearly distinct from the Holy Spirit at whose coming it is bestowed.

Thus from both the synoptic gospels and St John we find that our Lord while at times speaking after the manner of the Old Testament of Holy Spirit as a Divine influence or power; yet whenever the thought requires it distinctly presents a Divine person in personal activity as the fountain of that power, and this person He calls the Holy Spirit.

In Acts ii. we have the fulfilment of our Lord's promise, and the beginning of the experience by the Church of the indwelling or communion of the Holy Ghost. Passing by the quotation from the Old Testament in which Peter generally followed the seventy, we find here again the distinction of usage already pointed out. That with which the disciples are filled is Holy Spirit, Divine spiritual influence or power. But "the Spirit gives" (a

personal act) to them utterance. So in verse 33, that which our Lord received of the Father was the promise of "the Holy Ghost," the personal Spirit. That which we receive is His personal gift, the gift of the Holy Ghost (verse 38). But while the usage is thus quite consistent, with the exception of the variant reading (iv. 31), the personality is not otherwise so distinctly marked till we come to Acts v. 3, 9. Here the presence of the personal Spirit in the Church is most distinctly recognised. The act of Ananias is a "lie to the Holy Ghost," a directly personal idea which could not be used without extraordinary license of an influence or power. And his wife is charged with agreeing to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, again a mode of speech implying personality.

It can scarcely be doubted that in the mind of Peter there was present at this time the distinctly personal conception of the Holy Ghost. The same personal conception appears again in chap. vii. 51, in the words of Stephen, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," the word expressing personal antagonism. So in Acts viii. 29 the personality of the Spirit clearly is expressed, while in verse 39 an influence or power not necessarily either personal or physical snatches or hastes him away.

In many other passages of these records of the Apostolic Church the personal presence of the Holy Spirit is most clearly recognised in relations and acts which can only be understood as personal. "The Spirit bade me"; "The Holy



Ghost said, Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them "; these were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost "; "it seemed good unto the Holy Ghost and unto us "; "The Holy Ghost testifieth "; "The Holy Ghost hath made you bishops," "thus saith the Holy Ghost." These are forms of speech which certainly imply a constantly personal conception of the Holy Spirit.

It therefore appears in both the language of Christ in the gospels and in the historic record of the Acts—

1. That the personal Spirit of God is clearly recognized and distinguished from His own gifts, operations, or power, even when the latter are called by the term Holy Spirit.

2. That this distinction is especially maintained where the Holy Ghost is spoken of as acting, speaking, being sent from God, etc.

3. That this recognition of the personal Spirit appears not only in the consciousness and language of Christ, but also in that of the Apostles immediately from the day of Pentecost.

4. That it applies to the Holy Spirit almost every variety of personal attribute and predicate.

5. That in some of the passages the personal Spirit and His impersonal influence are so clearly presented side by side and yet as distinct that it is not possible to confuse them or regard the one as a mere personification of the other.

Turning now to the Apostolic epistles, it will not be necessary to classify them separately as

there are no such marked lines of development here as we have found in the doctrine of the Son. In fact we have already in the gospels and Acts almost every form of expression to be found in the Epistles.

The personal communion of the Holy Ghost was from the beginning the most prominent and distinctive feature of the Christian experience, and was in itself the witness of forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ. The deity of Christ was a deeper element of the new religious faith which was more slowly apprehended. Moreover while our Lord did not proclaim Himself, but left much to be learned by the teaching of the Spirit, His very promise of the Spirit was made in terms that fully implied His personality, and it would seem that the Apostles were expecting not a mere influence or power, but the coming of another Paraclete, who like their Divine Master, was to be their personal teacher and guide. To Peter thus, as well as to Paul and John, the Spirit was given and revealed Himself within in such directly personal relations, that from the very outset as we have just seen, He was recognized as a Divine personality. In the Epistles we find the same distinction between Holy Spirit as influence or power or results of such power in the souls of men, and the Holy Spirit as an active and personal agent, which we have already observed in the gospels and Acts. The same personal acts of helping, teaching, speaking, commanding, witnessing, comforting, are repeated. A single chap-

ter from St Paul, Rom. viii., will afford abundant illustration. Here the Spirit first gives us a law opposed to that of sin and death; He dwells in us; He leads the sons of God; bears witness with our spirits, helps our infirmities, and makes intercession for us according to His own mind, which is the will of God. So in 1 Cor. ii. 10-14, the Spirit searches and knows the deep things of God, and teaches us to express them in spiritual language. Because of the indwelling of this Spirit we are the temple of God to be kept holy, chap. iii. 16, and our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, chap. vi. 19.

One of the most remarkable references to the personal Spirit is 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18, when the Lord, *i.e.* Christ, and the Spirit are identified, probably not in essence, but in function, giving as Meyer says an economic identity (see John xvi. 7). But this very common work in which the one so represents the other that it can be said, the Spirit, and the Lord the Spirit, implies the equal personality of the two who are so united.

The Spirit of Sonship in believers might perhaps be thought to be but Divine influence or grace forming the characters of the sons of God, in other words, the fruits of the Spirit, and so it has sometimes been construed. But in Gal. iv. 6, the Spirit is set forth in directly personal form, "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.'" This is the foundation of the doctrine of a direct and personal witness of the Spirit held by the

most deeply spiritual Christians in various ages. From this point of view in fact we may sum up the New Testament presentation of the personality of the Holy Ghost. It is throughout a religious and not a dogmatic presentation, founded on the inward religious life of the Apostolic Church. Like the deity of our Lord it was involved in the very heart of this new religious faith, founded by Christ and ministered by His Spirit. In the fulness of the light and power of this spiritual life, the communion of the Holy Ghost was most distinctly felt to be personal, a personal intercourse with God, and hence expressed by St John in these words, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." And wherever in the history of the Church the fulness of this light and power has been obscured or diminished, there the doctrine of the Holy Ghost has either been neglected practically, or has fallen back to the lower conception of the Old Testament.

*Summary of the New Testament Elements of  
the Doctrine of the Trinity.*

The religious faith thus founded by Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic age thus embraces the following elements:—

1. Derived from the Old Testament we have the clearest conception of the unity, spirituality, and personality of God, and a remarkably full and spiritual conception of the Divine attributes as displayed in His works of Creation and Providence.

2. This conception was enlarged by a more profound and spiritual conception of the more personal attributes of truth, holiness and love. These were unfolded to faith not as concrete and limited ways of God, but as universal principles, and yet their application to the relation of the individual man to God was made more direct, and more mighty for the production of spiritual life in us than ever before.

3. This enlarged conception was given to men in the character, life, work and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, unfolded to the religious consciousness by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

4. As in former times men had by faith discerned in creation, God revealed in His works, and in human history God revealed in His providential judgments, so now their faith apprehended in Jesus the Son of God manifest in the flesh ; and in the Spirit of whose light and power they were conscious within themselves they discerned the Spirit of the Eternal God ; and to this Son and Holy Spirit their faith ascribed glory and service and worship together with the Father, who, in the Son and by the Holy Spirit was now more perfectly revealed to men than in all the past ages.

It will be seen that these elements are of the very essence of Christianity as a living religious faith and differentiate Christianity from all other religions. Other elements follow which we shall consider hereafter, but these are the foundation, not as mere speculative opinions, but as a living

faith derived from personal saving knowledge of Christ and the personal communion of the Holy Ghost. This faith is declared in the baptismal formula and in the Apostolic benediction.

#### EXCURSUS.

##### *The Relation of the Nicene Doctrine to the New Testament Faith.*

The ecclesiastical development of doctrine does not fall within the scope of the present work, but it may serve to bring our point of view, and the difference between ecclesiastical dogma and religious faith into greater distinctness if we point out briefly the relation of the doctrinal development of the first three centuries to this New Testament faith.

As soon as Christianity with these fully developed and consciously apprehended elements of religious faith came into contact with Greek philosophy reason began to demand an intellectual harmony of these elements which in all ages at first sight seem to contradict each other. If this faith was inconsistent with itself, or irrational, then it could not long survive. Such questions as these were urged by reason, and must be answered; if God be one, how are there three who are honoured and worshipped as God? In what sense are these called God and worshipped as God? If they are one God, in what sense are they one, and in what sense three? These and other related questions could not be avoided for



man is made a rational and enquiring being, and he cannot rest without the reduction of his ideas to a rational harmony of thought. The religious spirit might rest for a time in the intensity and strong assurance of its religious faith, but sooner or later, the attempt to solve these questions must be made. Early in the second century if not even in the first the philosophic mind of the Church began to work on this problem. The attempt was first made with the deity of the Son for here the pressure of the question was most obvious and most strongly felt. This made the problem more simple.

The speculative principles brought to bear on the question were first those of the Oriental theosophies. These resulted in such a contradiction and confusion of the essential elements of the Christian faith that they were at once rejected, and Gnosticism was never allowed a place in the Church. The instinct of religious faith was here true to its fundamental principles.

The Greek philosophy, especially that of Plato, was more successful, and would seem to have been in the Providence of God specially prepared to assist in this intellectual development of Christian faith.

By the help of its methods three solutions were possible :—

1. To reduce the distinction of the three as largely as possible, making the three modal manifestations of one being.

2. To so magnify the distinction as to eliminate

the problem by making the Son something less than God.

For nearly two hundred years speculation swung backwards and forwards between these two extremes.

3. Finally the problem was so solved as to harmonize the unity and the distinction, so that they may be conceived as eternally co-existent, by defining the sphere, or content, or idea of each.

For this purpose three ideas were defined :—

1. The conception of one immutable, indivisible, eternal Divine essence, to which all the Divine attributes belong, and in which they inhere was expressed in the Greek word *οὐσία* ; and the adjective *ἁμουνσιος* expressed the participation of the three persons in this indivisible essence.

2. The idea of personality as the unity of conscious active existence with identity and continuity of existence, and to which all acts belong, was expressed by the Greek word *προσωπον*, and later by *ὑποστασις*, and by the Latin *persona*. There are three persons in the one essence.

3. The idea of interrelation was expressed by the terms Father, Son, Spirit, begotten, proceeding, and by the preposition *ἐκ* and the genitive case.

The distinction was thus defined to be of persons; the unity, first of essence, and secondly of relation. In this relation there is a subordination which makes the unity of the essence possible and complete. The Father is first, the fountain of Deity, possess-

ing the Divine essence in and of Himself alone. The Son is second, receiving the fulness of the Divine essence from the Father from all eternity ; and the Spirit is third, sent forth and proceeding in the same fulness of the Divine essence and attributes from the Father and the Son.

It has been objected to this formula that it is a Greek or Platonic philosophy rather than a Christian faith. We must admit at once that the intellectual necessity for such a statement was stimulated by the spirit of the Greek philosophy, although arising out of the constitution of the human mind, and that the form was fashioned from the method of the Greeks. But granting this, we may ask three questions:—

1. Are the elements of the New Testament faith fully and clearly retained and expressed under the new Greek form?

2. Has any new matter been added to the New Testament ideas in this new presentation? If so, is it in harmony with the old?

3. Is this old Greek form still suitable to our age and mode of thinking? or could a better form retaining the full New Testament content and meeting the requirements of modern philosophy be now constructed?

In answer to the first question, we think the religious feeling of the Church in all the ages has recognized in the Nicene Creed a very full expression of the elements of the Christian faith. In the original discussions of the Council it does not appear that anyone objected to the proposed

creed as understating the faith. Objection takes the opposite direction wherever it has been taken.

In answer to the second question, we have already seen that the unity of the Deity and the possession of the attributes by each of the three, their distinct personality and their distinctive relations, are either expressed or implied in the New Testament faith. The one thing new is the distinction which separates essence with its attributes on the one hand from personality with its acts on the other. This distinction between essence and personality the Hebrew mind probably did not make. But neither did the Greek mind make it under either the Platonic or Aristotelian, or even the Neoplatonic philosophy. We think that Illingworth has quite clearly shown that the distinction of personality as a separate conception is the product of the Greek mind, it is true, but of the Greek mind under the influence of the Christian consciousness. The Greek philosophy doubtless prepared the way at least by teaching men to seek for such subtle distinctions, but Christianity alone developed it. The whole content of the Creed thus stands before us as either New Testament faith or Christian philosophy.

The only question that remains is, Could the philosophy of our day give us the full content of the New Testament faith in a more satisfactory form? Perhaps the true reply to this from history is the simple statement of the fact that every modern attempt at reconstruction either omits or distorts some New Testament elements. Until

our modern philosophy builds upon the solid foundations laid by the best of the Greeks a more perfect and enduring edifice than has yet been attempted, we can scarcely expect new help from philosophy. And since for the construction of a creed the highest perfection of spiritual life is needed, as well as the help of philosophical definition, we must equal the faith of the martyrs before we can compete with the old creed. For the present therefore we must rest satisfied with the Nicene Creed.

*DIVISION II.—THE WORLD AS  
RELATED TO GOD*

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CHAPTER I

CREATION

THE idea of Creation is already implied in our religious conception of God. By religious faith we discern God through His works. This, as we have seen, is not the mere rational discernment of the cause through the effect. It is rather something parallel to the intuitive action of reason, a discernment not of a thing, a force, but of a Person before whom we bow with reverence and fear. Where reason sees behind the universe a cause adequate to the effect, faith sees the personal Object of worship. The conception of creation thus springs from religious faith, and is a far wider conception than that of cause as furnished by reason. It satisfies reason as it assigns an adequate cause for the universe. No one can doubt that a God such as Christian faith believes in is adequate to the production of a universe such as we see about us. But if God were simply the cause of the universe, and the



universe the effect of God, they would be exactly equal, the one the measure of the other, and the one completely passing into the other. A cause is exhausted in its effect, its entire being, in so far as it is cause, passing into and continuing to be in the effect.

But this is not the religious conception of God. As we have seen, God is infinite, the universe is finite; God is eternal, the universe is temporal. How can the infinite and the eternal be the cause of the finite and of that which begins to be in time? Only by that act which we call creation; and creation, like all religious conceptions of God and His acts, implies personality. A personal God alone can create, *i.e.* so act out of the eternal fullness of His being, and so exercise His infinite power as to cause an absolute beginning of a finite being in time.

The conception of creation we find as a part of all historic religions, and the form of the idea and its perfection vary with the character of the religion itself. In the earlier stages of religion it is found in a very anthropomorphic form; where religious faith is mingled with philosophical speculation, it passes into a philosophy, which at times includes both mind and matter; only in the purest religious faith do we find the idea in its highest perfection.

We thus naturally turn to the Scriptures, first of the Old Testament and then of the New, to learn their conception of Creation. This we shall not find presented at all under the form of a

speculation, but in two distinct forms, each of which is distinctly religious—

1. In general expressions, statements and allusions, which set forth God as the Creator, the universe as the creature, and the relation of this creature to God's will, word and attributes.

2. In specific creation documents found in the Book of Genesis, and quoted or referred to in a few subsequent passages.

The first of these forms of presentation occurs most frequently, though not exclusively in four books of the Old Testament—Isaiah, Job, Proverbs, and the Psalms. Between these four books there is a very intimate relation, especially in their method of dealing with this subject, owing probably to the period in the religious life of the Hebrew people to which they belong. Isaiah's ideas of the creative work of God are expressed in contrast with the low conceptions of deity which marked the Babylonian idolatry. They include the expanse of heaven, the vast stretch of the earth, and man with his mysterious spiritual nature, as the characteristic works of God from which we may learn His glory and the inconceivable extent of His power and His wisdom. He makes no attempt at a metaphysical conception or definition of creation ; but looking out on all the host of heaven, he thinks of each as within the perfect knowledge of God, and coming forth in the plenitude of its being directly by His power. Hence springs his faith that to the power of the Everlasting God there is no

weariness, and of His understanding there is no searching. All power is derived from Him, and they that wait on Him ever "renew their strength." Very like Isaiah in their general representation are Psalms viii. and xix. They dwell in detail upon the works of God especially, the glories of the heavens, and from these read in broad outline the power, the wisdom and the greatness of their Creator.

Psalm xxxiii. enters much more into detail, though not from the outward side of the works, for these he simply mentions as the hosts of heaven, the deeps of the sea, and the sons of men. But all are made by the Word of God. "He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." And the same word orders all things by abiding laws which are stronger than all the plans of mortal men; for "the counsel of the Lord standeth fast forever, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations." Moreover, the Psalmist sees in creation another aspect of the character of God; "All His work is done in faithfulness. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the loving kindness of the Lord." The work of creation is thus the outcome and act of the highest moral attributes, a personal act of God which with perfect control and power calls into existence and establishes all that is including the mysterious hearts of men which He fashioneth alike.

Very similar to these contemplative psalms are the passages in Job and the Proverbs. Some-

times, as in Job ix. 8-11, xxvi. 5, etc., we have a dwelling on the works in their wonderful glory, and then the worshipful recognition of the unseen Creator. "Lo these are parts of His ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of Him, but the thunder of His power who can understand." Again as in Job xxviii. 23, etc., and Prov. viii. 22, etc., we have that expanded view of the work of creation which delights to follow the wisdom of God in the ordering of the wonderful laws of nature.

These are examples of biblical methods of looking at the work of Creation, for the establishment of faith as against degenerate views of God, and for its enrichment by a more perfect contemplative understanding of His work. From these we easily turn to the hortative use in the Book of Psalms. The faith of an oppressed and desponding people is revived by the thought of the Creator God. Some of these are marked by their poetic beauty, as Ps. lxxiv. 16-17; some by rare insight into the difference between the unchanging Creator, and the finite creature whose being given from God is called back again by Him or changed at His pleasure, Ps. cii. 25; while others, as Psalms xcv. to c., set forth the Creator God as the object of universal worship to all the lands. Perhaps none of these passages surpasses Psalm cxxxix., combining as it does the strongest religious feelings with the widest and most profound contemplative view of the creative work of God.

In all these passages we have no attempt at what might be called the natural history of Creation. Creation is viewed generally as it appears to the ordinary observer. Only in a very few passages is there any reference to detailed facts of natural law, or reference to the minuter and more mysterious works of God. It is the magnitude, the variety, the beauty of His work as a whole which awakens this religious faith which apprehends the Creator. Metaphysical speculation as to the manner of His working or scientific speculation as to its order and succession and instrumentality are quite excluded, or rather do not enter into this purely religious point of view. It does, however, present several most important elements of religious doctrine as to the Creator and His work.

1. It excludes all materialistic conceptions of God and His working. He is the unseen God. The attributes ascribed to Him are purely spiritual. He is thus a personal God.

2. It everywhere presents creation as the result of a personal act of will. It is not a development, but a moral act, an act of goodness, wisdom and power springing from God's good pleasure.

3. It derives the whole being of the creature in all that it possesses of the gift and attributes of life from this Divine act; and so makes the creature entirely depend on the Creator.

4. It recognizes the finiteness of the creature both in time and space, as the result of the

creative act. Both earth and heaven have their ends, and, however vast beyond our knowledge, they are weighed in His balance, or measured in the hollow of His hand. The most perfect of these Old Testament conceptions are contained in the New ; and in connection with the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, there appears in the New Testament an entirely distinct view of Creation set forth, especially in the writings of St Paul, St John, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. This must be the subject of a later consideration.

*The Creation Documents.*

We now turn to a most remarkable and difficult portion of the Old Testament Scriptures, the first two documents of the eleven which make up the Book of Genesis or Origins. These sections are clearly the intentional work of the writer or editor of the book, and are distinguished from each other after the Hebrew literary fashion. No intimation is given as to the source from which they have been derived, and here the mechanical theory of inspiration has been applied in its extreme form. To this has been opposed the view that these belonged to the class of myths, or poetical fictions, common to ancient peoples. The advance of three modern sciences has thrown upon these ancient documents an entirely new light, and, we think, given them a new relation to our modern theology, and especially to a theology which seeks to build upon the truths revealed to religious faith as distinguished



from the sciences and philosophy. First of all, Biblical criticism finds in these documents, as in the entire book, a composite character, showing that they have been subject to the laws of literary development. This conclusion, which, however we may differ as to details, is in its main point founded on indisputable internal evidence, renders the mechanical *ab extra* theory of their origin untenable. It does not necessarily detract from their value as a part of Scripture. It only calls for a more intelligent interpretation.

Again, modern archæology has found that congeners of these documents exist among other ancient peoples and religious traditions, especially in South-Western Asia. Some of these agree in identical details, although in religious spirit they may be quite diverse. This discovery interferes almost as seriously as the previous one with the traditional view of the character and interpretation of those documents. Again our modern geology finds itself sometimes at variance and sometimes in remarkable harmony with the cosmogony founded on these documents, and has been invoked both for and against the traditional view of their character and origin. It is, we think, the only honest conclusion that the teaching of modern science is not consistent with the traditional view. This view has, however, extended so largely into our modern ecclesiastical dogma and theologies, that a re-interpretation becomes the very foundation of a theology, in which the harmony of truth will be established between theology and science

upon a solid and permanent foundation. We must, therefore, seek a careful historic interpretation of each of these documents.

*The First Document* (Gen. i. 1 ; ii. 3).

This document is distinguished by its peculiar artistic form, indicating the most elaborate care in its construction. It consists of seven sections, each introduced by a vav conversive, the Hebrew particle of historical and also of logical connection or continuity. This connective is in each case followed by the phrase "God said," except in the seventh, where it is replaced by "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." Each of these sections, except the last, is closed by a refrain, "There came an evening, there came a morning one day," etc. The last is also called the seventh day, though without the evening close. The days are thus natural days of twenty-four hours, but are clearly a part of the literary form which encloses each of the seven successive acts and separates it from the following. This is the usual office of a refrain in Hebrew literature. It is a break, a thing thrown in, not a part of the logical connection of thought, though it may have a general fitness to it. In this case, it marks off the artistic subdivisions of the creative work under the figure of days.

Looking over the sub-divisions of the creative work, we first of all note that they are not perfectly uniform. The first and second days are

single works, indicated by the single use of the formula, "And God said." The third is double. So the fourth and fifth are single, the sixth is triple—*i.e.* the formula is used three times. Again, we find that these six fall into two sections, the second of which traverses again the ground of the first. The first day we have light ; the fourth, light-bearers ; the second, the atmosphere, or firmament, and the waters ; the fifth, the life of these elements ; the third day, the land ; the sixth, the life of the land. To these six fully completed divisions, divided into two larger groups, the seventh day forms the literary conclusion, and the first two verses of chap. i. the thesis, or introduction. The whole is constructed upon the principles of Hebrew parallelism, and is framed, one might almost say, artificially. It only lacks the free-play of the imagination, or the emotions, to make it a poem ; but for neither of these is it conspicuous ; it has rather almost the exactness and directness of a scientific or legal statement.

Its artistic form, however, gives a most important clue to its interpretation. It bears the marks of human thought carefully elaborated for a purpose. The human origin of this thought, and the purpose of this elaboration, must therefore be sought for its proper understanding.

The ideas entering into the document are—

I. Religious. God, creation, the living Spirit of God, His command, His delight in the good, His supremacy in ordering all things, are all

clearly developed and leading ideas. These ideas imply high advancement of religious conceptions and of language for their expression.

2. Ideas of nature. The universe is viewed after the Hebrew manner of the heavens and the earth ; chaos is described as a deep without order and without inhabitant ; and the creative work proceeds along this logical line, giving it first order, in the first four days, and then inhabitants. Further, the four primitive elements of the earliest science or philosophy are recognized, light (fire), air, water and earth ; seemingly in the order either of their importance and efficiency in nature as the basis of all its movements and life, or of their approximation to the purely spiritual and Divine. Our modern science may be perhaps disposed to look with supercilious contempt on these old-world ideas of nature ; but while they were far from a perfect science in the modern sense of the term, they embodied the most universal and important facts and processes of nature ; and embodied the observations of a race that was yet young, and to whom the foremost and universal things of nature were more obvious than to our microscopic and artificial life. A primitive scientific order may also be observed in the classification of vegetation, as grass, herbs and trees ; of living things, as fish, fowl, creeping things, cattle, wild beasts, and men. And a religious and natural ordering of seasons and observation of celestial phenomena is obvious in verse 14, following which we have a primitive astronomy.

The ideas of this document as thus enumerated are clearly not the deeply emotional conceptions of a new revelation of marvellous facts to religious faith by a purely supernatural process, but they are the clearly defined conceptions of a somewhat matured religious faith on the one hand, and on the other of an observation of nature which was at least laying the foundations of scientific knowledge. This scientific knowledge was as yet confined to the great outlines and to the more obvious and external facts of nature; but as these are themselves the result of the most universal and interior forces, even their most superficial observation reveals the great essentials of natural order and relation, and proves true to the great outlines of the most advanced science. Such general truth cannot be ignored in this document, especially in placing light and heat (אור) in the first place as determining the ordering of the air, the waters and the earth; again in describing the air as separating and determining the movements of the waters, the waters as bounding as well as fructifying the land, and the dry land as the foundation of vegetation. All these are universal facts of nature, whether expressed with the refined definition of modern science or the more primitive forms of the early ages. So is the order which puts the heavenly bodies at the origin of the seasons, and the seasons before the appearance of animal life, as governing their breeding, their food, their great movements, and in fact their whole life. So still further is the order which

begins life with the waters, thence rising to the air and the dry land, and finally to man.

The document thus clearly embodies that most ancient and obvious generalization of nature, which appears in Greek philosophy as well as elsewhere, as embracing four elements—fire, air, water and earth, as well as other earliest classifications and conceptions of nature. These certainly are not identical with modern science. But they are none the less true to great obvious facts of nature, and as such express truth so fundamental that all true science in all ages will recognize it and be in general outline in harmony with it. Perhaps one might go further, and say that the impulse by which the men of the young world grasped the broad outlines of nature was itself of Divine origin and near akin to the highest religious inspiration. Such impression is strengthened by the indications of unexpected depth and clearness of insight into nature which we meet with in this document, such as the recognition of second causes in the use of the *hiphil* and in the address of the creative commands to the elements, the recognition of creation as the foundation of permanent law in the repeated phrase "it was so," and of the fixity of species in the phrase "after its kind," in reference to both animal and vegetable life. Again, there is the entire absence of any theory or conception as to the interior method of creative work, thus avoiding the great source of both ancient and modern error. This applies as well to the description of chaos which is made up



of four items, unordered, uninhabited, dark, but moved by the Spirit of God. We may safely compare this in its scientific simplicity and assured truth with either the firemist of Tyndall with its promise and potency of all that is to be, or with the undifferentiated matter of Herbert Spencer.

In turning from this human and scientific side of this document to consider its purport as an expression of religious faith, and hence as a part of the Word of God, we may first compare it with two later portions of the Scriptures, both of which imply a knowledge of the document before us, and hence may be studied as commentaries on it.

1. Exodus xxii.: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." The writer here evidently follows the writer of Gen. ii. 1-3 in making the Divine example of the progressive work in creation followed by rest, a sanction of the Sabbath law for man. This leads us to the consideration of the significance of the form of the original document presenting creation as a work of six days. This form is not based on the natural subdivisions of the creative work, for the writer himself makes eight, if not nine, creative acts, each introduced by the formula "And God said." The alternative seems to be that the form is adapted to the Sabbath week, an institution already in existence and recognized as of Divine authority. The writer

does not assert that the Sabbath was instituted immediately on the creation of man, though that may have been true. He simply connects the institution of the weekly holy rest, as existent in his time, with the creative work of God as its sanction by God's example of creative work and rest; and to make this sanction more obvious, he presents God's work, like man's week, in six days. This same presentation and sanction is adopted in the Mosaic decalogue as given in Exodus, though a different form of sanction is adopted in Deuteronomy.

2. Our second parallel passage and commentary is to be found in Psalm civ. This psalm clearly evinces not only a knowledge of Gen. i., but also, in its continuation through the psalms following, of the entire history from Genesis to Joshua. This series of psalms dates at the close of the captivity or later.

Opening with devout adoration of the greatness, honour and majesty of God, the psalm proceeds to rehearse in the order of Genesis the great steps of the creative work:—

1. Verse 2*a*.

"Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment."

2. Verses 2*b*-4.

"Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain;  
Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters;  
Who maketh the clouds his chariot;  
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind;  
Who maketh winds his messengers;  
His ministers a flaming fire."

3. Verses 5-18.

"Who laid the foundations of the earth,

That it should not be moved for ever :  
 Thou coverest it with the deep as with a vesture ;  
 The waters stood above the mountains ;  
 At Thy rebuke they fled ;  
 At the voice of Thy thunder they hasted away ;  
 They went up by the mountains, they went down by the  
 valleys

Unto the place which Thou hast founded for them.  
 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over ;  
 That they turn not again to cover the earth.  
 He sendeth forth springs into the valleys ;  
 They run among the mountains ;  
 They give drink to every beast of the field ;  
 The wild asses quench their thirst.  
 By them the fowl of the heaven have their habitation,  
 They sing among the branches.  
 He watereth the earth from His chambers ;  
 The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works.  
 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,  
 And herb for the service of man ;  
 That He may bring forth food out of the earth :  
 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man,  
 And oil to make his face to shine,  
 And bread that strengtheneth man's heart.  
 The trees of the Lord are satisfied ;  
 The cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted  
 Where the birds make their nests :  
 As for the stork, the fir trees are her house.  
 The high mountains are for the wild goats ;  
 The rocks are a refuge for the conies."

4. Verses 19-23.

"He appointed the moon for seasons :  
 The sun knoweth his going down.  
 Thou makest darkness and it is night ;  
 Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.  
 The young lions roar after their prey,  
 And seek their meat from God.  
 The sun ariseth, they get them away,  
 And lay them down in their dens.

Man goeth forth unto his work  
And to his labour until the evening.  
O Lord, how manifold are Thy works !  
In wisdom hast Thou made them all."

5 and 6. Verses 24<sup>b</sup>-30.

"The earth is full of Thy creatures :  
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  
Wherein are things creeping innumerable,  
Both small and great beasts.  
There go the ships ;  
There is leviathan, whom Thou hast formed to take his  
pastime therein.  
These all wait upon Thee,  
That Thou mayst give them their meat in due season.  
That Thou givest them they gather ;  
Thou openest Thine hand, they are satisfied with good.  
Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled ;  
Thou takest away their breath, they die,  
And return to their dust.  
Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created ;  
And Thou renewest the face of the ground."

We cannot read this extended description of the work of creation without feeling that the writer is in touch with Gen. i. He follows its order as well as its fundamental religious conception. Each passage speaks the thoughts of a writer in intimate communion with God and with nature, or rather with God in nature. The first, out of the book of nature, reads the original book of God ; the later out of the same book reads, not only His original work in the same general order, but also His manifold purposes of loving-kindness, and His continued working in nature ending with the earthquakes and volcanoes which to His mind represent creative power and

work to-day. But the Psalmist, while preserving the same general order and religious spirit and conceptions, takes his own poetic licence in presentation. He is not concerned with a particular sanction of a religious ordinance, and hence he does not mark out the days. He does not present creation as the coming forth of the world in obedience to a series of Divine commands or spoken words, but rather as the vesture, the habitation, and the retinue of God which He hath made for Himself. The light is His garment; the heavens are the curtain of the tent in which He dwells; the clouds are His chariot carried on the wings of the wind; and stormy tempest and flashing lightning are His messengers. In the human form of thought in Genesis we have the orderly statement of a primitive science, in that of the psalm the first play of poetic imagery and pictorial amplification of the theme which he borrows from the older writer. In all cases he freely weaves into his composition new facts gathered from nature, either by his own observation or that of contemporary students of natural phenomena, filling the whole with his own inspired consciousness of the presence, power, wisdom, goodness, and glory of God. All this confirms our interpretation of Gen. i. as an inspired presentation of the observation and generalization of nature which were common in the age in which it was first written, and which were common to the Hebrews with other neighbouring people, and which each clothed in

its own religious garb. And from all this we may learn the important fact that inspired men freely accepted the scientific as well as the historical knowledge of their time, true as it was from their point of view, being a presentation of facts according to the then existing development of the human understanding. It would indeed have been both useless and unwise had the inspiring Spirit thrown the minds and knowledge of all the ages into confusion by anticipating the natural development of human powers. Under such an order, Genesis would have been written, not in harmony with the science of the nineteenth century, but with that of centuries, perhaps millenniums, beyond our time. We can indeed look back and understand the science of all past time, and see that it expresses truth as seen in the light of that age and valuable for all the ages; and such truth we can easily translate into terms of our own thought, even as we translate Hebrew into English. But the science of the year 3000 may be utterly beyond our ken notwithstanding all our good opinion of ourselves and our advanced age. But even in the age of Genesis, both inspiration and science recognized the following important principles which are true for all the ages:—

1. They looked at facts in nature.
2. These facts led them to the idea of order and progress in God's works.
3. They also led to the idea of second causes



in God's works, especially in the operation of the great elements of nature.

4. They led to the conception of Divine law in nature.

5. They united the existing science with religious faith as being both alike, founded in the observation of the works of God. Thus the earliest science and the earliest religion were scarcely separated.

But the mistake of attempting to discredit religion because of its alliance with the best knowledge of the past ages, and the attempt to fetter science for ever to the forms in which it first served as the handmaid of religion, are both alike opposed to the spirit of religion and of science, and to the holy will of the God of truth.

*Summary of the Religious Teaching of the First  
Creation Document.*

Having thus studied the document from its human, scientific, and literary side, we may turn to that which constitutes its essential significance as a part of the Word of God—namely, its moral and religious content.

1. It builds upon a clearly defined theistic basis—viz., an absolute beginning of the universe, as well as of each of its great stages or steps of formation. This is its philosophical foundation, not as a formulated philosophy, but as an accepted and implied truth. Before this beginning, its religious faith finds a personal God, the Creator of all things.

2. It never for a moment separates the universe, even in its state of chaos from the presence, power, and creative energy of the Spirit of God.

3. It makes each step in the work of creation the result of the expressed thought and will of God, denoted by the phrase, "God said," His word.

4. It connects each step with the moral nature of God, His good-will or, in language of the creation psalm, the loving-kindness of the Lord. All this is expressed in anthropomorphic terms, such as will convey their true meaning to a child, and yet commend themselves to the reason of a devout philosopher; we cannot to-day improve on them.

5. It views man from the spiritual side of his nature, apprehending thus his true relation to God as created in the Divine image and likeness.

6. It makes the peculiar form in which it presents the work of creation the means of giving religious—*i.e.* Divine sanction to the three fundamental human relations and duties.

(a) The law of labour, underlying all the industrial and material side of life.

(b) The law of the family and marriage, underlying all social and political organization and progress.

(c) The law of the Sabbath rest, underlying all religious observance, and all moral and spiritual development both of the race and of the individual.

The forms by which these institutions are attached to the account are each part of the

literary structure, including the conception of God's doing His work in six days, His addressing to the newly-created man His commands as to labour and the propagation of the race, and the Sabbath rest of God Himself.

But this literary form is not a mere fiction. It has its foundation in the deepest inner truth, and it expresses that truth in a form which conveys the kernel of the true idea to the mind of a child, and which develops the full conception of truth to the reason of the most advanced intellect and meets the moral and religious needs of all intermediate stages. It is thus, like the parable, a natural form of expression adapted to all ages, and to the truth itself.

*The Second Creation Document (Gen. ii. 4, etc.).*

As has been shown most fully by modern critical study, this second document differs in almost every point from the first, not as an opposed or necessarily contradictory view of creation, but as an entirely different presentation. This difference is most marked—

1. In style and language. We have no longer the set phrases and forms of the oracular or preceptive style, and the use of symbols is much more limited, and is not so much the unconscious symbolism of anthropomorphism, as an intended veiling of thought on one or two mysterious subjects. The use of the combined name Jehovah-Elohim throughout has long since been remarked.

The tendency to discursive amplification, as in the description of the rivers of Eden, is another feature of the style.

2. In point of view. The central thought of the first document is God, His works, His ordained will. That of the second is man, his abode, his origin, the beginning of his moral, religious, and social life. The interest here is thoroughly human, and is especially connected with man's moral nature, and the origin of sin. In this respect it is in touch with the theme and work of the prophetic line of revelation or religious development, as the first document is with that of the priestly.

3. In contents. There are here, as in the first document, ideas derived from reflective generalization of facts of nature and human life. But instead of the study of nature in itself and in its relation to God, we have here the relations of nature to man and to his life. It turns its thought also to man and the questions of his moral development, the origin of sin and of evil, and the beginning of family life, and the general relations of man to his environment. These are embodied in a series of traditions which are remarkable in themselves, but which appear in so many ancient forms and among so many peoples that it is difficult to conceive of them as other than historical though presented in a pictorial and discursive form which enlarges historic tradition by obvious inferences, and sometimes presents both facts and inferences in symbolic form.

4. The part of the document which deals specifically with creation touches only the following points :—

(a) Instead of chaos it begins with the primitive unfitness of the earth for the abode of man.

(b) It briefly describes the creation of man, (1) in his physical nature "dust"—*i.e.* elementary material from the soil; (2) in his spiritual nature, "inbreathing of God."

(c) It describes at length the preparation and location of his primitive abode, enlarging on its geographical relation to what were then known places.

(d) It describes the development of his moral nature, his intellect and language, and his social nature and desire for society, in contact with the young world around him, and under special provisions ordained of God.

(e) It describes the final completion of his life by the creation of woman, and her being brought to man.

It would be a great mistake to interpret the document, full as it is of the picturesque colouring of the imagination, as if it were a bald chronological record or memorandum. It is rather a pictorial and to some extent symbolical representation of great and important facts, and intended to transmit, in a form which has proved itself capable of perpetual remembrance, the earliest traditions of the race.

Of the nine elements which enter into this representation, three, *viz.*, the garden, the state

of innocency, and the two significant trees, enter into many other ancient traditions. They must have had an origin sufficiently powerful to perpetuate its influence for thousands of years, and among various branches of the human race. Such origin could scarcely be the figment of imagination. It must have been based either directly or indirectly upon some fact of supreme importance, universally known either by common experience or by widely extended tradition.

The geographical locality is a matter of ancient tradition, and is verified by modern ethnology, and thus takes its place on the same basis of original fact.

Of the remaining five elements, the first is negative, the absence from the world of man and his adapted environment; the second is a simple and direct statement of an obvious fact, the formation of man in the two elements of his nature dust from the soil, and inspiration from God; the third is the statement of the Divine order which relates man to his environment by the law of labour, not at first as a curse, but as a good and a duty; the fourth is the statement of another fact, the development of man in thought, language, and emotion by contact with the world of living creatures around him. The last is the Divine bringing together of the sexes; perhaps we have in this the most obvious veiling of mysterious things in symbols. But, however we may interpret the picture, the simple fact is obvious. But while thus every separate element



of this document stands forth as founded on fact, either patent in nature or handed down by tradition, how are we to interpret the presentation, the clothing which has woven the whole into so striking a picture? The answer to this question must be given, not from the standpoint of literature, the human side, but from the religious side, which views the document as a part of the Old Testament.

The key to this we think we have in the fact so clearly revealed by critical study, that this entire document bears the impress of the prophetic style. It was the constant habit of the prophets in all the ages to use both direct and tropical forms in the presentation of religious truth. This we think we certainly have in the garnishing of this and the following chapter. The background shaded by negatives, the order in which the various elements are marshalled, the minor touches of amplification, and perhaps the peculiar account of the formation of woman, never elsewhere referred to in Scripture except on the single point of the order of time, may largely belong to the literary or symbolic elements of prophetic style. It was also characteristic of the prophetic teaching that they employed as the basis of their moral teaching facts of passing history, and traditions of ancient times with which the people were familiar. So here materials gathered from various sources are so interwoven as to present a fundamental view of man in his moral relations and of the origin of sin and evil

which runs through the whole of subsequent Scripture. The document itself is directly referred to in the Book of Job and in the writings of St Paul, and perhaps once in the prophetic books and always on these points. It thus bears not so much on the doctrine of creation as on the doctrine of sin, and we must return to it under that head. The passages in Job do touch the creation of man, and do not favour the old mechanical view of the creation of man's body while they seem to demand the most spiritual view of his higher nature. This second creation document, when reasonably interpreted, can thus in no sense be made to contradict the religious teachings nor even the scientific ideas of the first. Its religious conceptions are fundamentally the same as those of the first. The Creator is the personal God. His will and wisdom order all things for good and right, and man is here a spiritual being, the image and inbreathing of the Spirit of God. The new phases of religious truth pertain rather to the moral nature and history of man than to creation. But here, as in the first document, man's industrial, intellectual, social and moral life are all ordered from his creation by God.

*The New Testament Doctrine of Creation.*

To complete our biblical view of the doctrine of Creation, we must now advance to that higher point of view afforded by the New Testament, and see how creation is not only linked to the

intuition of God in nature, but also to the more complete revelation of God in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. If the Old Testament revelation of God as Creator reveals a personal God, then certainly we might expect that the New Testament revelation of this personal God as Triune would involve a special relation of each of the three persons to the work of creation.

It is Paul who first ascribes both creation and Providence to the Son, as he also first brings the doctrine of the Son of God into clear dogmatic recognition. But as St John brings the doctrine of the Divine Sonship into its full and final scriptural statement, so he too completes the doctrine of creation through the Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." It must not be forgotten that the Master Himself laid a broad and solid foundation for this faith, especially in His teachings, as recorded by St John. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth." The mystery of creation through the Son or Word of God is but part of the mystery of the Trinity. If in the bosom of the Father there dwelt the Son from eternity, and if in the process of time God's

world was to be the theatre of the Son's mediatorial work and of God's highest revelation of Himself through that Son, then it is but in the order and harmony of these ideas that the Son should be the Divine agent in the creation as well as in the redemption of the world. It is exactly from this point of view that Paul approaches the doctrine. "In whom we have our redemption the forgiveness of our sins ; Who is the image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creation ; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ; all things have been created through Him and unto Him ; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews follows the same line in Heb. i. 2, 3, and xi. 3.

This highest revelation to religious faith links creation with the eternal Trinity of the Godhead, and identifies the Old Testament creative Spirit with the personal Spirit of the New Testament, and thus brings every part of our religious faith from the first idea of God in Creation to His full revelation in our hearts by His Son into perfect unity and harmony. It also completes that moral conception of God as love which is revealed in Jesus Christ, as we find that God through the Eternal Son of His love creates all things, not only through Him, but for Him, filling this world with this Divine love.

Creation is thus not an isolated or accidental event with God, but comes forth as the goodwill of that Divine perfection which is in Himself from all eternity in the Trinity of His being.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ABIDING RELATION OF CREATED THINGS TO GOD

THIS part of our subject is usually treated under the head of Providence; but to religious faith there is a clear distinction between the domain of Providence and that of Natural Law. Providence is connected with moral government and God's relations to His sentient Creation; natural law relates to the physical continuity of God's creation. Providence may have, and we believe really has its foundation in Natural Law, but they are not to religious faith identical conceptions, and religious faith may even conceive of Providence as setting aside or overruling natural law. It is therefore best to consider these two apart. In this case the relation of God to the laws under which He maintains the physical constitution of the universe is most directly related to the creative act by which they were originally established.

The existence of an established order in nature is by no means a discovery of our modern science. The extension of science has vastly increased the range of our knowledge of that



law. It has even introduced it into spheres where its presence was before unsuspected. It has largely eliminated from our intelligent ideas the thought of accident. It has taught us to search for the cause of all things. And this extension of the domain of fixed law has perhaps even served to diminish our religious sense of the presence of God in nature ; since we so easily fail to take in more than one point of view at a time. The narrow specialization of our modern science perhaps contributes not a little to this result.

But while modern science has vastly extended our knowledge of specific laws of nature, their existence in general, and the fact of their prevalence even in the most obscure and mysterious fields of nature is recognized in Old Testament times. We cannot read such a passage as Job xxviii. 25, 26, which speaks of a weight for the winds, a measure for the waters, a decree for the rain, and a pathway laid out for the lightning, without recognizing the fact that these things were all under Divine order in the thought of the writer, and that, not as an arbitrary will exercised from time to time, but as a wise and established order. Such an order becomes to them an integral part of religion. It is the form which nature religion takes in the highest development of religious faith. Hence the returning seasons with the fruits of the earth are a covenant of God with man, Gen. viii. 22, and the rainbow in the cloud is the sign of God's

promise that storms shall cease as well as come according to His order. It is a mistake therefore to suppose that the Old Testament fails to recognize orderly law in nature. The men who lived so largely in touch with nature could not fail to observe the reign of law, if not in all things, at least in the greatest things of the world around them.

When, therefore, their religious faith apprehended the immediate presence of God in all His works, in the falling rain, in the thunder and lightning, in the earthquake, in the ebbing and flowing tide, and in the daily movements of the sun, moon, and stars, it is not to be supposed that this religious faith contradicted the idea of fixed law. On the other hand, it clearly included it, and recognized it as a manifestation of the Divine attributes of wisdom, power, and goodness. The order of nature, the energy of all her movements, and the beneficent ends which they served were all alike from God. Such is the teaching of Psalm lxv., civ., cxlv., and many other Old Testament passages.

The peculiarity then of the view which religious faith takes of the relation of God to nature may be described by the term immanency, used, not in the Pantheistic sense of physical contact or identity, but in the truly religious sense of a personal omnipresence. God is infinitely above the creature, and independent of the creature. But He is graciously present with the creature. As Paul has it, "In Him we live, move, and

have our being," "in Him all things consist," and He is "upholding all things by the word of His power."

The scriptural expression of this sense of the presence of God in and to all His creatures is not marked by the refinements of modern philosophy. It says nothing of continuous creation or of consensus. But it clearly contains at least the common-sense recognition of the real being granted to the creature, and the religious recognition of the universal presence of God with that being.

It is easy to unite this religious sense of the presence of God in all nature, which is the primary element of all nature religion, and even precedes the conception of creation itself, with the doctrine of the Divine attributes, and to find in God's constant relation to His world illustrations especially of all the attributes of the first and second classes; and this is most amply done both in the Old Testament and in the New.

The mistake which opposes this religious view of the presence of God in nature to the scientific conception of fixed law arises on the religious side from a narrow view which loses sight of the infinite perfection of the Divine intelligence, and calls in, in its ignorance, miraculous intervention to solve every perplexity in the affairs of the world, and even to answer all the short-sighted desires of its prayers. On the other hand, it arises from that atheistic conception of natural

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law which makes the law itself a power competent to effect its ordered results; and so fails to recognize in all law the expression of the wise will and the energy of the immediate presence of God.

## CHAPTER III

### EXCURSUS ON THE RELATION OF RELIGIOUS FAITH TO SCIENCE

IF the principles which have guided us in our study are correct, it will be seen that there can be no antagonism between true religious faith and true science. There need not be even the appearance of conflict, if it is recognized that each has its own field of truth, and its own Divinely appointed means of learning that truth. The intuitions of faith seek and find beyond nature a firm foundation on which the heart may rest, to which the will may yield its obedience and the conscience its conviction of right, and to which our whole being may render holy reverence, joyful worship, and the deepest affection. This foundation is eternal and immutable in its very nature, for it is God.

The observations and inductions of science, beginning with the senses and completed by the processes of reason, seek for the finite, and the changing, the progressive and orderly works of God in time, and the law which governs that order.

The test of truth here is fact ; and the fact is

reached by observation. Religion also demands fact, for, although it finds its own field of truth beyond the finite facts, yet it can only reach that field through the facts. But for this purpose it can take the facts as understood by the science of any age, or even as observed by the "untutored mind" of the unscientific man or the savage himself. Science does, indeed, open up new vistas to faith through the wonderful things of the material world, or through the great laws which marshal the facts of human life and history. But the great essential truths of religion are independent of the refinements, and especially of the theories of science, and are open to the vision of faith in the rising and setting sun, the starry firmament, the changing seasons, the rolling sea, the refreshing rain, and the food and gladness with which God fills even the savage heart.

This is more evident, inasmuch as in all lands religion precedes science, and prepares the way for, and gives the strongest stimulus to her work. A modern scientist even ventures to remark that nature reveals her deepest secrets to devout minds, and if this be true, religion furnishes not only stimulus but spiritual power for the work of science. On the other hand, it is certainly true that the devout scientist finds his religious emotions quickened and his religious faith strengthened, if not even enlarged, as he stands in the presence of nature's wonders as revealed by the telescope, the microscope, and the apparatus of



our modern laboratories. His workshop verily becomes a temple from which his religious heart fervently worships God.

Faith and science are thus placed in God's order in the most helpful and friendly of mutual relations. And it is only when a narrow faith which mistakes the form or channel of its activity for the inner truth, seeks to fetter science by imposing upon it the forms of a past age which were accidentally associated with the record of religious truth, that the appearance of conflict arises; or, on the other hand, when a science which is without faith, in the pride of its discoveries, denies God and imagines that it has reached the eternal foundation of the universe in some new law. Mistaken ideas will of course conflict, both with truth and with each other; but truth, the truth revealed to faith, that revealed to conscience, that revealed to our sense of beauty, and that revealed to reason, and that observed through the physical senses, which are the servants of all the great spiritual faculties of our being, truth is one, and has no conflict with itself, for it is all of God.

The inspired faith of the earlier ages was in this respect far in advance of the theology and dogmatism of our later times. The old time men of faith did hesitate to accept the views of nature of their time, honest views, views founded in facts, and views substantially to their thoughts embodying the facts. These were the vehicles through which they reached the truth of faith,

and by which alone, as we have seen, they could express it to their fellow-men. But there is not the slightest proof that, while embodying religious truth in the forms of thought and language of their own time, they therefore intended to impose these upon all time any more than that they expected the Hebrew language to be spoken in all lands and down to the end of time.

But there was an advantage in the embodiment of religious faith in forms of thought and speech of the world's comparatively unscientific youth. They still suit the thoughts of the great majority of men, and they will always suit the early thoughts of childhood. If the child is ever to reach the highest life even of intellect, and certainly the highest grade of spiritual life, the foundations must be early laid in religious faith. And down to the end of time the beautiful presentations of nature, as opening up vistas through which we can see God, which offered themselves in all their freshness and glory to the world's childhood, will fit the childhood of each successive generation, and serve as their first steps to all higher knowledge. Our children will never be born full-fledged geologists or palæontologists, and the first of Genesis will always be to them a more suitable lesson than Darwin's "Origin of Species." We need only take care not to mix with it a narrow dogmatism which does not belong to it.

There is also a practical lesson to be learned by

the religious faith of all the ages from this study. We need not fear to link our religious faith with the best science of our time. We need not do this in such a way as to make that science a part of our faith. To do so would be to repeat a fatal mistake of the past. But we need not fear to keep pace with science, and to live in hearty sympathy with every effort which it makes by its own legitimate methods for the advancement of knowledge. An attitude of suspicion towards science is entirely unnecessary and prejudicial in every way to the cause of religious truth. Science will, of course, refuse to stand still. Its continuous advance is itself a proof of its imperfection as well as of its power. But we are not freeing ourselves from that imperfection by clinging to the science of a past age because it was once the handmaid of religion. Our true attitude is to make the science of to-day the very best, and the latest if the latest be best, the handmaid of religion for our own age, *i.e.* the avenue through which we shall see God in His works with the fresh, keen vision of new thoughts. From this point of view it is not inappropriate that we devote a paragraph of this excursus to

### *Evolution.*

It is not possible for the theologian to ignore the importance of evolution as the most influential scientific doctrine of our time. It has so

largely shaped his own fields of study that he cannot avoid it if he would; and it has proved itself so richly fruitful of results in every field of scientific investigation, that to ignore it is to deprive ourselves of the most potent of all modern aids in our search for truth. It is without doubt the most universal of the laws of nature as yet discovered by man. Its presence is equally manifest in the world of matter, the world of mind, and the world of history. Its discovery can scarcely be credited to any one man, though Darwin by its application to the field of biology gave it a grand impulse. But even in this field he, if the greatest of the pioneers, was not absolutely first or alone; and we may trace back its influence as brooding over the currents of human thought for centuries or even millennia. But in the last half century it has stepped into the high places of all knowledge, and claimed an imperial sway over every field of human thought except one, *the thought of God*. Faith asserts that He, the infinite, the immutable, the eternal, changes not. What then is the relation of this most wonderful conception of modern science to religious faith? If we have read Gen. i. aright, it is a profound ancient view of nature made a vehicle of sublime religious truth. Is the modern view of the universe capable of being similarly employed and of giving us a fresh outlook upon the perfection of God and the grandeur and glory of His ways? Or does it contradict the conception of

God and His attributes which we derive from religious faith and religious inspiration?

In seeking an answer to this question we are not attempting a new demonstration of the identity of Genesis with modern geology. All such attempts are founded upon a mechanical theory of inspiration, and upon what appears to us a false premise that Genesis was a supernatural anticipation of modern science. There are, without doubt, remarkable points of unity between Genesis and our modern science; but the ground of that unity lies, we believe, in the fact that both are founded in nature, and that nature suggested the same ideas to the profound thinker who lived in open-air communion with her in ancient times, and to the laborious student who has patiently traced the steps of her history in modern times.

A narrow and dogmatic theology and a conceited science equally dogmatic may both miss this deeper ground of unity; and half way men of the same spirit may construct makeshift reconciliations which the very next forward movement of science will cause to tumble to the ground. All this, we think, must be laid aside, because not founded in simple truth. The clashings of the extreme men are unnecessary because arising from radical misconceptions, and the reconciliations of moderate men are worse than useless because they help to perpetuate the misconceptions, while they provide no adequate and permanent remedy for their results. We say this

in no spirit of disrespect to the noble names in science and theology who have made such attempts.

Evolution as a scientific conception, *i.e.* as a broad induction of the great facts of the universe, may be stated as follows :—

It is that law or order in nature under which each successive phase or step of the movement of the universe as a whole, and in each of its parts, takes up into itself all that has gone before, and adding thereto some new increment of perfection passes onward to that which comes after.

This definition is of course exceedingly general, taking no account of decay and elimination, and the struggle for existence and other processes by which the great progress is carried forward.

It is quite evident that this broad conception may assume an agnostic, an atheistic or materialistic, a pantheistic or a theistic form, as it allies itself with one or other school of philosophy. It may also divest itself of all religious spirit and find its whole satisfaction in the intellectual conception which it has formed. This is no fault of the scientific conception ; but of the man who has imbibed an erroneous philosophy, or become dead to religious feeling. It is as if a man stood before a magnificent statue employing his microscope to observe the crystallisation of the marble.

But is there aught in the conception itself alien from the religious spirit ? Can it not also lift the soul to a Pisgah from which we may get vision of



the unseen? That this conception is not in conflict with the religious spirit, nay more, that it can help to inspire the most devout and earnest faith, is proved by the life of such a man as the late Professor Drummond. May we not go further, and venture to say that the religious spirit itself has grasped the same idea in the case of St Paul, who, comparing the knowledge of God revealed in Christ with the more imperfect light of preceding ages, sees therein a Divine unfolding of an eternal purpose of God. And may we not go further and say that St Paul grasped this unfolding, not as an outward and formal series of Divine acts, but as the inner working of the living spirit of God dwelling in the hearts of His people. It was this vision of the evolution of the purpose of the ages in the sphere of spiritual life which called out one of Paul's noblest exclamations of devout doxology, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think according to the power that worketh in us, Unto Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end. Amen."

So tracing a moral evolution, which out of the unbelief and disobedience and consequent rejection of the Jews, finds a new and higher life for the Gentiles, and in turn will one day reach its highest fulness by bringing in the Jews themselves, with a sweep of moral power which will be nothing less than a new life from the dead, thus making even decay and moral death work

out a higher perfection ; he exclaims with a transported vision of faith, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out." Ending up with, "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen."

What is the modern doctrine of evolution but the extension of these Pauline ideas from this highest sphere into all the lower spheres of God's creative work, thus extending the golden chain of Divine purpose, the tracing of which awakened Paul's highest religious emotion, until it binds in one all God's works and all God's ages, from first to last, and from the least to the greatest.

The fact seems to be that, so far from religion being opposed to this conception, religion alone gives it its highest perfection, makes its scope truly universal. It is perhaps not too much to say that its birth in the human mind first came from the religious spirit, and of this same religious faith we believe it is destined to become the noblest of helpers. On the other hand, estranged from the fundamental truth of religious faith, it becomes, not an evolution of ever-increasing glory, but a mere endless permutation of blind forces, working they know not from whence or whither, a purposeless and irrational movement, an incomprehensible series of shifting identities, which confounds alike reason, faith, and every other sense of truth.

The Christian theologian may thus with all boldness lay claim to this and all other modern science as pillars in that great temple of truth, in which religion is the throne of glory from which God reigns supreme in His universe, and on which He is worshipped in spirit and in truth.

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